

I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

SYNOPSIS: Nicholas Trench, Jerry Mordant and Molly O'Brien are about to sit down to a deserted factory on the Essex marshes to look for information about a stolen formula, worth millions, which belongs to Molly. They are discussing plans in Jerry's hotel room when Jerry catches a waiter listening. The latter believes he is in the way and tries to escape. Trench, Mordant and O'Brien follow him to the hotel, a part of his, to find out what he saw about the matter.

Chapter 26
MR. CRESSWELL

I UNDERSTAND," said Jimmy earnestly. "You leave it to me, sir. I ain't one to miss much that's going on."

I picked up an envelope from the table beside me, and looked down Jerry's address and telephone number.

"Here you are," I said, "and here's a pound note just in case you want it. You're a stout fellow, Jimmy, and I'm much obliged to you."

He slipped the money and envelope into his trousers pocket and grinned cheerfully.

I looked up from the typewritten document which I was holding in my hand.

"But, hang it all," I protested, "this is absurd!"

Mr. Cresswell slipped his glass off the port, and then, knocking the ash off his cigar, glanced at me over his spectacles.

"And where precisely does the absurdity come in?"

"Why, the whole thing's ridiculous. It's just a bare statement of your out-of-pocket expenses. You haven't charged a ha'penny for all the work you've done yourself."

"I don't intend to," he said, and his head a little on one side and his face puckered up in a smile. "It has afforded me the utmost happiness to be able to help you, and no respectable solicitor charges for his own pleasures."

"That's all very well," I expostulated, "but . . ."

"Now listen to me, my dear boy. Your father was my oldest friend, and for that reason, even if I wasn't as fond of you as I am, I wouldn't dream of taking any more of your money. This wretched business has already cost you the best part of five hundred pounds. You will need what you have left—every penny of it. If I consulted my own wishes, I would much prefer to throw that piece of paper into the fire, and regard the whole thing as finished, but since you insist upon a statement, you can send me a check for the amount stated there. Now fill up your glass, and don't let's argue about the matter any more."

I tucked the account into my inside pocket, and carried out his instructions.

"So be it," I said, "but I wish I could think of some way to express my gratitude. I'd like to make a full length statue of you, and stick it up in the middle of Bedford Row."

His eyes twinkled. "It's a tempting suggestion, but I think, on the whole, I should be better satisfied if you were to tell me a little more about your immediate plans and intentions." He scrutinized me shrewdly. "So far, you know, you have been—how shall we put it?—just a trifle evasive. I've a strong suspicion that you're up to something of which you're not quite certain that I should altogether approve."

I LAUGHED to cover my embarrassment.

"You make me feel exactly like George Washington," I said. "Father, I cannot tell a lie." I hesitated. "The truth is that I'm in a bit of a difficulty. Certain things have happened the last two days which I am not at liberty to discuss. If I were you would be the first person I should consult."

"I am glad to hear that, anyway. You mustn't think I want to force your confidence, but if you are trying to get to the bottom of this mystery, and if you have discovered anything which throws a fresh light on Osborne's death, it's not altogether impossible that my advice might be of some value."

"I can promise you one thing at least," I answered. "The very moment I've any definite proof of what I'm looking for I shall come straight to you."

"Well, I wish you the best of fortune," he paused. "Do you propose to stay on with your friend Mordant, or are you going back to your own studio?"

"I shall stop with Jerry for the time being," I said. "I can't get on without somebody to talk to, and

most of the people I used to know have wiped me off their visiting list."

"Aren't you taking rather an exaggerated view of the situation?"

"Not a bit," I replied. "Look at Seymour and look at my dear friends at the Royal United Arts. Oh, by the way, talking of that, I forgot to tell you that I'd sent in my resignation, after all."

He shook his head. "I am sorry to hear it. From your own point of view I think you have taken a false step."

"Perhaps so," I admitted. "Anyhow, it will be a great relief to Seymour, and it will save old Redland the trouble of writing me an unpleasant letter."

"If you prefer to adopt a generous attitude, there's no more to be said. Still, I can't help feeling that you have behaved in a rather quixotic manner. Legally speaking, your position was unassailable. You have done nothing which could be regarded as misconduct, and if the committee were foolish enough to expel you from the Club, they would undoubtedly be laying themselves open to an action for heavy damages."

"It wasn't generosity," I objected. "I'm fed up with the whole stupid bunch, and until I've proved my innocence, I don't want to have anything more to do with them." I finished my glass and glanced at the clock. "About time I was toddling home," I added. "I'm afraid I've kept you up to an ungodly hour, but it's your fault for being so kind and having such wonderful port."

"THERE'S plenty more in the cellar when you feel like sampling it again," he rose to his feet. "Well, good night, my boy. Take care of yourself, and if there's any possible way in which I can be of further help to you, don't hesitate to let me know. I'll come and see you out because I fancy the servants have gone to bed."

He accompanied me into the hall, and waving his good night as he stood on his doorstep I started off along the deserted pavement of Barton Street.

Considering all Cresswell's kindness and generosity, I had felt distinctly uncomfortable at not being able to tell him the truth. Apart, however, from the fact that he would certainly disapprove of the lies which Jerry and I proposed to

take, there was the unanswerable barrier of my promise to Sir William Aron.

It was Sir William who had put us on to what, at all events, might prove to be the right track, and until he gave me permission to disclose his dealings with Osborne, I was in honor bound to respect his confidence.

If I could discover the real murderer through my own efforts, the whole story would naturally be bound to come out. Failing that, the only decent course was to stick to my word, even if by doing so I robbed myself of the much needed help and counsel which Mr. Cresswell was in a position to supply.

As I emerged into Parliament Square, the hands of Big Ben were pointing to half-past eleven. It was a dark windy night, with masses of black cloud chasing each other threateningly across the sky. Spots of rain were already beginning to fall, and having no desire to get wet through, I stopped a passing taxi and instructed the man to take me to Whitehall Court.

During the brief drive my mind was chiefly occupied with thoughts of Molly. In the absence of Jerry who, in company with George, had set off for Leigh directly after breakfast, she and I had whiled away a pleasant and uneventful day wandering about Hampstead Heath, lunching at the Spaniards and walking back through Regent's Park.

She had been in the best of spirits and apparently not in the least nervous. Nothing suspicious or unusual had happened since the incident with the waiter on the previous afternoon, and I had finally left her at the hotel at six-thirty, when she had announced her intention of having an early dinner and reading a novel in her bed room.

There was nothing in all this to make me the least apprehensive and yet somehow or other I felt curiously worried about her. So strong was the sensation that I was half inclined to change my mind and order the taxicab to drive me to the Milan. On second thought, however, I abandoned the idea.

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Jimmy Fox brings bad news from the Milan, tomorrow.

STOCKHOLDERS OF MEDFORD PCA TO MEET JANUARY 11

"We want every one of our stockholding members in Jackson county to be present at their first annual meeting of the Medford Production Credit Association in Medford, January 11," is the urgent invitation extended by directors of the Medford PCA who emphasize that matters of real importance and interest to members will be taken up at the meeting starting at 9 o'clock in the court house auditorium. Secretary L. J. Deuel says that all farmers are welcome to attend the meeting, but only those owning Class B stock will have the privilege of voting. Class B stockholders have one vote each, regardless of the number of shares they own.

"The Medford Production Credit Association is the farmer's own cooperative organization for making production loans on a business basis at actual cost," Deuel points out. "It isn't a government agency and it doesn't loan government money. The federal government, through the farm credit administration, helped provide the machinery, but it is up to the farmers themselves to operate this machinery successfully."

"We want all farmers to learn more about this cooperative credit system by attending the annual meeting January 11 at Medford. A full report will be given on the past season's operations and there will be opportunity for free discussion."

Other demands also were stipulated by the FERA Workers' Protective union of Silver Bow county.

BLONDE WILL TESTIFY AT SECOND TRIAL OF MAJOR FOR MURDER

TOPEKA, Kas., Dec. 27.—(AP)—Miss Grace Brandon, San Antonio, Tex., blonde stenographer who figured prominently in the first trial of Major Charles A. Shepard, army surgeon, on charges of poisoning his wife, is one of 43 witnesses subpoenaed by the government for the second trial to begin here January 28.

Major Shepard was accused of poisoning his second wife, Mrs. Zenana McCloskey Shepard, at Fort Riley, Kansas, in June, 1929, so that he might be free to marry Miss Brandon, then a 23-year-old stenographer at the San Antonio army post. The two had met in an army boarding house.

A witness for the government at the first trial, Miss Brandon testified to receiving letters written a few hours before his wife's death and a few minutes afterwards, in which he told of his anticipation of their marriage.

Major Shepard, who was married a third time in 1933, was convicted of first degree murder at the first trial, but was granted a second trial by the United States supreme court.

Courthouse to Build Dams. EXCELSIOR SPRINGS, Mo.—(UP)—The foundation of the old Clay county courthouse, being razed, will be used to construct dams on soil erosion projects. CCC workers appropriated the lower part of the historic structure.

ANCIENT CHIEF'S TOMB FOUND IN GEORGIANA

MOSCOW — (UP) — An elaborate tomb, apparently belonging to an ancient chieftain, recently has been found at Mtschet, ancient capital of the Georgian republic. Fashioned from heavy stone, the tomb was beautifully carved with an image of a dancing faun with a bunch of grapes held high in its hand—the symbol of Bacchus, the god of wine. A silver coin bearing the image of the Parthian king, Gogarzes, was also found in the tomb, which was probably erected in the First Century, A.D.

FERA WORKERS DEMAND 30-HOUR WEEK, \$12.50

BUTTE, Mont., Dec. 27.—(AP)—Between 500 and 600 Butte FERA project workers went on strike today demanding a 30-hour week and a minimum wage of \$12.50 for unmarried workers.

Other demands also were stipulated by the FERA Workers' Protective union of Silver Bow county.

ON AND OFF

MOTHER TAKES GREAT PAINS DRESSING HIM UP TO BE TAKEN TO SEE GRANDMA, AND GOES TO ANSWER TELEPHONE

FEELS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE IN HIS "DRESS-UP" CLOTHES AND WONDERS WHETHER ANYTHING CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT

TACKLES SHOES NEXT. DISLIKES SHOES EXTREMELY

SHOES PROVIDE QUITE A TUSSEL BUT HE FINALLY WINS OUT.

GETS ONE ARM OUT BUT CANT GET IT OFF OTHER ARM

LETS IT GO AT THAT AND STRUGGLES TO REMOVE BONNET, BUT CANT UNTIE THE STRINGS

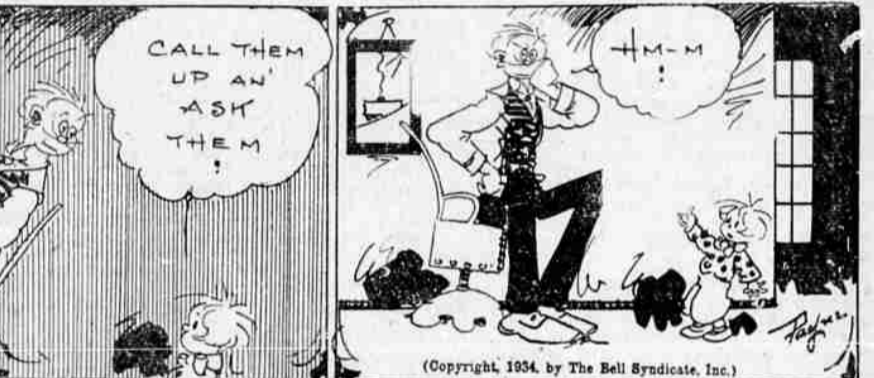
SOCKS COME OFF WITHOUT ANY TROUBLE. SETS TO WORK ON COAT WHICH IS MAKING HIM TOO WARM

TWISTS BONNET TO RAJISH ANGLE, AND IS CONTENTEDLY SUCKING THE STRINGS WHEN MOTHER RETURNS

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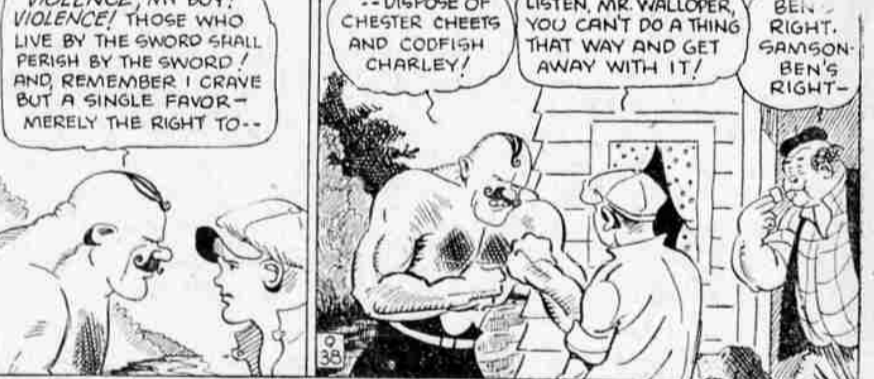
S MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—An Important Detail!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Not Samson's Way



THE NEBBS—Faux Pas



BRINGING UP FATHER



JACKSONVILLE GRANGE YULE PARTY IS FRIDAY

Christmas has again come and gone, but the Yuletide spirit still lingers in the Jacksonville Grange. Friday evening they are having their Christmas program and tree. The Grange chorus will sing a group of hymns in keeping with the season, also several more difficult selections. Business meeting scheduled for Friday will be dispensed with and a truly social party enjoyed by all Grangers and their friends. Everyone who comes is reminded to be sure and bring an inexpensive gift to put under the tree. Packages will be exchanged following the program. Shadow on or red on new they say their best when we get through. "Fruit's can do it." Phone 22.

ART OF CURSING LOST ASSERTS BRITISH LORD

LONDON.—(UP)—Lord David Cecil thinks that cursing has gone out of fashion and that in no walk of life today are people able to express dislike in really effective terms. "I think this falling off in the art of cursing is very distressing, especially as there has never been more to hate than there is now—what with newspapers, films, Communists and Fascists objects for hate on all sides," he said. "Possibly it is due to the rise of science, which tends to make people look upon each other as mechanisms—and you cannot be very angry with a mechanism."

WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably. Tombridge Casualty Works