

# I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

OSBORN: At last Nicholas... the man Nick was acquitted of having killed, himself. It was the husband of Mrs. Gowland and the husband of Mrs. Gowland and the husband of Mrs. Gowland...

## Chapter 44 THE FORMULA

I DON'T know how my husband knew about Osborne and me. Mrs. Gowland went on, "unless he may have found a letter which came for me after Jack went away. Perhaps he had been watching us all the time."

By a desperate effort she managed to moisten her lips. "My husband went up to London—went up by the train. He was there for two days and when he came back he told me what he had done. At first I didn't believe him, but it was true—oh, my God, it was quite true! I thought he would kill me too."

"Sometimes"—once more she buried her face and sobbed brokenly—"sometimes I wish he had."

"You poor soul!" Molly bent over her and softly touched her hair. "I am so terribly sorry for you. It's dreadful to think what you must have been through."

With an impulsive gesture Mrs. Gowland caught hold of her hands. "Oh, you're good—I don't know who you are, but you're good and kind. No one has ever been kind to me—except him."

"I understand, too," I said, "and I don't blame you in the least. I am only grateful to you for telling us the truth now."

Jerry stepped forward. "You have cleared up one great injustice, Mrs. Gowland," he said quietly, "but there's someone else you've wronged besides Mr. French."

She stared up at him. "Someone else?" she whispered.

He pointed to Molly. "There were some papers which belong to Miss O'Brien in Osborne's safe. He stole them from her father when he was in America. They were taken out of the house on the night that he was murdered."

"Papers!" She sat up with a quick gasp. "Yes—there were papers—a whole packet of them. He took them away to make it look like a robbery."

"What did he do with them?" Jerry rapped out the question like a pistol shot.

"He brought them back here to show me. There was blood on them—Jack's blood. He wanted me to see it."

She rose unsteadily, holding on to the back of the chair. "They're over there, in the bottom drawer of the big chest. He used to take them out every night and look at them. He was mad, I tell you, mad—mad."

Crossing the room in a couple of swift strides, Jerry gave an ineffectual tug at the two handles.

"It's locked!" he exclaimed. "Where's the key?"

She moved slowly towards the sofa, turning back the blanket, bent down over the stiff, sprawling object beneath.

"Here it is," she said.

WE WATCHED breathlessly while Jerry wrenched open the drawer. For a moment he knelt there, fumbling amongst its contents; then, suddenly jumping to his feet, he swung round towards us.

In his hand was a loosely wrapped brown paper packet.

"Take a look through these, Molly," he said quietly.

He slipped off the covering as he spoke, and half a dozen crumpled and crumpled documents tumbled out on to the table. The largest and most conspicuous of them consisted of two sheets of blue paper fastened together by a brass clip, and with a quick movement Molly snatched it up from amongst the others.

"This is it! This is the formula! Father described it to me. He said..."

A low, startled cry rang out through the room, and we all three turned sharply towards the door. Mrs. Gowland was standing there, pale and rigid—one hand stretched out towards the open window.

rush amongst the undergrowth, and at the same moment Jerry fired. In the low-ceilinged room the noise of the report was deafening.

"Did you see him, Nick? It was that swine from the Milan."

"Springing towards the hearth, I grabbed up Gowland's gun and jerked open the breach. There was an unused cartridge in the left barrel.

"Are you sure?" I demanded.

"Quite. I'd know him again anywhere."

I stared out into the shrubbery. "Pity you missed him," I said. "He is off now to tell the others. We shall have the whole gang here in a minute."

"Looks that way," Jerry glanced round calmly, and then walking up to the table, stuffed the remaining papers into his pocket. "Only one thing to do," he continued. "We must make a run for the boat, and trust to luck."

Molly stepped forward. "Can't we take Mrs. Gowland with us?"

The white-faced woman shook her head.

"I shall stay here," she said stonily.

Jerry held out the still smoking revolver. "You take this, Nick, and give me the gun. It's no use to you with that shoulder of yours." He flung open the door. "Come along, children—time we were off."

With Molly between us, we hurried along the dark passage and out into the narrow porch. It was only a short distance to the beginning of the path and, clicking forward the catch of his gun, Jerry, who had paused on a moment for a quick look up and down, led the way forward across the gravel.

If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget that stretch of moonlit path, or our stumbling run through the muddy and silent farmyard.

All my senses were keyed up to their highest pitch by the deadly and imminent danger that surrounded us, but at the same time, as I gripped my revolver and peered anxiously into the shadows, a wild and uncontrollable elation was throbbing through my heart.

At last the truth was out—at last the black cloud which had hung over me so long was shattered and dispersed. I was free now—free to look the world in the face—free to marry Molly and take up my life and work where it had been broken off.

The thought sang through my mind like music, and the shrieking of the wind as it whistled across the desolate marsh made a brave and fitting accompaniment.

"We can't rush the last bit—not in this light," Jerry had pulled up again in front of the stile. I'll go first because I know the path. Keep an eye behind you, Nick, and if you see any trouble coming, sing out at once."

Ten or twelve yards in the rear, and with frequent backward glances over my shoulder, I followed them along the uneven track. I had a haunting feeling that at any moment half a dozen figures might come bursting through the hedge in hot-foot pursuit, but in the faint moonlight that filtered down through a veil of driving cloud, the long line of black bushes remained silent and unbroken.

All the same I was thankful enough when I at last scrambled up the gorse-clad slope and found myself looking down on the friendly little Seagull as she lay bobbing about at her anchor.

With the wind blowing strongly against the incoming tide the peaceful-looking estuary we had left now presented a very different appearance. What met my eyes was a tossing sea of broken water stretching away to the entrance, where a long, curving swell of white-capped breakers smashed violently against the half-submerged bar.

It was not too encouraging a prospect, and with an uneasy doubt as to how long it would be before we could get away, I hurried down to the dinghy, in which Molly and Jimmy had already taken their places.

"What do you make of it, Jerry?" I asked.

"Not too bad," was the reply. "We can't start just yet, but there'll be plenty of water in another hour." He jerked his head towards the boat. "Tumble in and I'll shove her off. We can get as far as the Seagull, at any rate."

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Monday, a race begins.

## SCIENTISTS HOLD PACIFIC SERPENT MERELY A SHARK

WASHINGTON (UP)—"Hair" of a "sea serpent" discovered on the beach of a small island off the Pacific coast in November, has been identified here as the gill raker of a basking shark.

Dr. Earl S. Meyer, curator of fishes at the National Museum, is convinced that the creature was a basking shark although naturalists failed to identify it with any known genus of sea animal.

The "hair" consisted of strands of fine material about a foot long. It serves as a fine sieve for the minute plankton upon which the shark feeds. No other fish boasts such an arrangement.

The shark's body apparently had been stranded on the beach several days. It had lost its fish-like appearance and had assumed a serpent-like shape.

California fishermen, Dr. Meyer said, bring in two or three specimens of the fish each year and sell to fertilizer companies.

The hair was forwarded to the state department by the American consul at Prince Rupert, British Columbia.

National Museum officials pointed out that this was the first opportunity they had had to correctly identify an alleged sea serpent. They believe that if most of the current sea plankton were subjected to scientific examinations, they would turn out to be fairly familiar animals.

## 30 YEARS SINCE FIRST AUTO TAG ISSUED BY STATE

SALEM, Ore. (UP)—A framed hand-written document on the wall of the office of Carl D. Gabrielson, head of the motor vehicle division under Secretary of State Earl Snell, today revealed that the 30th anniversary of the issuance of the first automobile in the state will soon be at hand.

The plate went to Helms W. Thompson, Eugene, and he had to wait more than two months after he had applied to get tag No. 1.

Thompson wrote Secretary of State F. I. Dunbar on March 13, 1905, that his automobile was "an Oldsmobile, ten horsepower, single cylinder engine, light tonneau, colored dark red."

It was May 19 before his license—it was called certificate No. 1—was issued.

On the same day other licenses went out, the first receiving them besides Thompson being: Dr. W. B. Morse, Salem; George H. Graves, Salem; J. D. Matlock, Eugene; E. L. Hemington, Woodburn; F. L. Chambers, Eugene; R. H. Robinson, Arlington; Clinton J. Kurtz, Salem; P. A. Combs, Portland; George J. Pearce, Salem; E. C. Dixon, Grants Pass; and Byron O. McCulloch, Grants Pass.

Four of the cars were tiller-steered. Two were steam powered, six of the machines were "merry Oldsmobiles." Others were Whites, Darracs, an Auto-Car and an Orient, names no longer known on automobile row.

The act of the 1905 legislature which provided for licensing of cars and the registration of their owners was entitled "An act regulating automobiles on country roads."

The fee was \$3. The same license number could be kept for five years.

"There can be no conflict between science and religion," Mussolini.

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## YEAR AFTER YEAR QUALITY WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT

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## SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS (Copyright, 1935, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

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## S'MATTER POP

THIS IS JUST SOMETHING AMUSE-ING TO BE THINKING UP

HA HA

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DOVA THINK I COULD GET A PATENT ON THIS IDEA, MISTER WIMPY, AN MAKE SOME MONEY?

WELL, I DON'T KNOW!

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## TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Plot That Failed!

LISTEN, SKEETS, THEY THINK WE'RE ENTIRELY OUT OF GAS—BUT WE'VE ENOUGH IN THE RESERVE TANKS TO FLY THIRTY MILES

BRIT, DEL SEGUNDO IS OVER THREE HUNDRED MILES FROM HERE—WE MIGHT LAND IN A JUNGLE

WE'LL HAVE TO CHANCE THAT—MAYBE WE CAN FIND A SMALL TOWN—I'LL CLIMB INTO THE SHIP AND PRETEND TO BE LOOKING FOR MAPS

I GETCHA, AN' WHEN YOU BOOST TH' STARTER I'LL JUMP ON TH' WING

FREDON, SENORS, BUT EL LIBERATOR INSTRUCT ME TO SAY HE WILL MUCH REGRET IF YOU CLIMB INTO AIRPLANE—FOR THEN I MUST SHOOT YOU—THEN IT WOULD MAKE EL LIBERATOR VERY SAD

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## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Information

WE'RE IN LUCK, RUBE—DID YOU HEAR WHAT THOSE PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT?

YEAH, THEY SAID CHIRP GAVE A SHOW HERE A COUPLE O' NIGHTS AGO

WHERE'S THE SHOWBOAT, BUD?

HUH?

THE CIRCUS BOAT! WITH THE ONE-LEGGED CLOWN AND THE TRICK DOGS—

OH, THAT! IT JEST WENT OUT O' HERE ABOUT A HALF HOUR AGO WHILE I WAS GETTIN BAIT—

I WAS TALKIN' TO THE WILD BOY O' BORNIN—JEST HIM AN' THE DOGS WAS ON THE BOAT—THE OTHER FOLKS WAS GONE—

YOU WERE TALKING TO WHO?!

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## THE NEBBS—The Wise Guy

NEBBS, ME AND THE BOYS DECIDED WE'D STAY A FEW DAYS AFTER THE BOSS LEFT. THIS WATER IS GREAT—I DIDN'T KNOW BEFORE THAT WATER WAS GOOD FOR MOREN A BATH OR A CHAPER

WE'VE GOT THE FINEST CURATIVE WATER IN THE WORLD. TWO WEEKS OF THIS AND YOU'LL TRADE IN YOUR AUTO FOR A SCOOTER

IF IT WASN'T FOR THIS BOSS OF YERS ID HAVE BEEN ELECTED TO THE SENATE—HE DOUBLE-CROSSED ME AND HE'S A RELATIVE BY MARRIAGE!

WHAT DO YOU MEAN HE DOUBLE-CROSSED YOU? YOU JUMPED OUT OF YOUR POLITICAL PERAMBULATOR AND TOLD THE PEOPLE THAT YOU WERE TIRED OF BEING PUSHED AROUND BY CROOKED POLITICIANS UNWYNT AND UNHAPPENED?

WE GOTTA LIVE AND WHAT DROPPED OFF OF ONE OF YOUR REFORMERS WOULDN'T KEEP A PROMISE ALIVE YOU PICKED OUT YOUR OWN PATH AND YOU RAN INTO A BUN ALLEY

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## BRINGING UP FATHER

MOTHER, WHY DON'T YOU TELL YOUR SISTER HOW TO FIX HERSELF UP SHE IS SO OLD-FASHIONED IN HER DRESS—

I DID! TOLD HER SHE MUST DRESS UP TO DATE—DRESS JUST AS I DO—

SHE WENT DOWN TOWN YESTERDAY AND BOUGHT SOME GOWNS—SHE IS UPSTAIRS NOW TRYING THEM ON—I'M TRYING TO SEE THEM—

BOY, OH, BOY! WAIT UNTIL I STROLL ON THE AVENUE!!

LOOK—MOTHER!

I DID!

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## BLIND WOMAN SERVES AS PHONE OPERATOR

CLEVELAND (UP)—Totally blind, Mrs. Josephine Enever operates the busy telephone switchboard at the Cleveland Society of Blind offices. Though her real job is home instructor for blind persons, teaching them to read Braille, type, sew and earn money, she has been filling in at the switchboard job when workers had to double up on duties.

Spent 20 cents in Campaign JACKSON, O. (UP)—Ed Dickins' expense account as defeated candidate for state representative, 20 cents.

## SIX-YEAR-OLD GIRL MARATHON RUNNER

CLEVELAND (UP)—Six-year-old Virginia Wahl is only in kindergarten now, but she may become a champion long-distance runner when she grows up.

DOVER, O. (UP)—Dr. S. B. McGuire, one of the oldest physicians in this section of Ohio, is dead at 75.