

MURDER TONIGHT

BY LAURENCE W. MEYNELL

Chapter 37
THE ANSWER

"DEAR INSPECTOR," the Sergeant's letter began, "I am sorry for all the official fapoodle there will be about this business."

"I don't know whether you are beginning to guess it or not, but I killed Arthur Burdett; an action for which I wasn't sorry at the time, but which I am inclined to regret now."

"Burdett was not only a miser but a rascal as well—I had reason to think some time ago that he got various women up to the Court on one pretext or another, but it had nothing to do with me and so I didn't take much notice. But lately he had his eye on my wife; twice he rang her up when he knew I was away and asked her to go up there to take a message for me. I thought, until today, that that was why she went up there, but I know differently now."

"It so happened that the second time she was there (or at any rate the second time I know of) I was on some of his land beyond Nyetson, seeing about a tree that had blown across the road and that had to be cleared away. I called at the Court on my way back and as luck would have it ran into Alice just as she was leaving."

"She looked a bit upset and flushed, and I suppose she was frightened at seeing me there. Anyway when we got home that evening she told me that he had rung her up on an excuse of having some message for me and asked her up, and when she had got there there was no more talk about any message, he ended up by trying to make love to her. I suppose now that she told me all these half-lies because she was thoroughly scared by my turning up there unexpectedly and was afraid that I already knew something."

"I thought it over a day and decided to go up on Monday, when I knew his man would be out, to trash the whole thing out with him and see where we stood. So as not to worry Alice, I told her I was going out on my usual Nyetson round after poachers."

"Actually I went up to Enderton Court; I used the back drive. I got to the Court at about five minutes to seven. I should think I knocked on the front door and the old miser came shuffling across the hall just like Lumsdale described. He opened the door as far as the chain would admit and peered out. I said 'I want a word with you Mr. Burdett about a little matter.'"

"He hesitated a moment and then took the chain off and told me to come in. I followed him across the hall into that little study sort of place where he always used to sit. We sat down and he croaked out, 'What do you want at this time of night?'"

"I asked him straight out what he was doing with my wife. He burst out into the usual sort of abuse which he used whenever he lost his temper. What the hell did I mean, and how dare I have the bloody impudence, and all that sort of thing. 'Of course I took no notice of that, except perhaps that it made me even angrier than I was already. When he had run short of breath I told him quite quietly that my wife had complained of being deceived up there under false pretenses and of having been molested, and that unless he had some satisfactory explanation to give I intended to make an official case of it and prosecute him. 'It was then that the whole atmosphere of the thing changed. I didn't speak at all for the next ten minutes, he had it all his own way. He told me, amongst a lot of other things, that if I really imagined my wife went up there unwillingly it was about the richest thing he had ever heard of; that his great difficulty had been to keep her away once he had first got her up there; that he knew well enough what I was after, that the whole thing was a plant—that I wanted money. 'I couldn't stand it anyway and when he said that about Alice I lost control of myself (damned fool that I was). I had my truncheon out before I knew what I was doing. When he had said what he did about Alice I leaned across the table and spat at me. I had my hand on my truncheon as I've told you and when he

leaned forward and opened that scrawling mouth of his I hit him with out knowing that I did it."

"It killed him at once. I hit him on the head which I didn't mean to do in a sense you may say that I didn't mean to hit him at all, it all happened quickly and under the stress of temper. However, all those things don't matter. I did hit him and killed him and it was murder."

"I lost my head for a few minutes and damned nearly turned tail and ran, leaving everything just as it was, but, of course, that soon passed. I knew nobody could have heard anything and I was certain no one had seen me going up the back drive. My truncheon was the first snag. I thought I would provide a weapon to make it easy for everybody."

"Those two Indian Clubs took my eye so I jumped up on a chair and got one down (the second fell down with a hell of a clatter, it made me jump a foot, and I realized how nervy I was). 'When that was finished I put the chair back in its place (the one I had stood on to get the clubs) care fully brushed off any evidence of it having been stood on and had a good look round."

"One club was on the floor and I picked it up and hung it on a nail on the wall. It just shows how nice taken a man can be about the state of his mind and how easy it must be for murderers to make silly mistakes; I could have sworn I was perfectly cool and collected and yet I never realized that I was putting that club back on its wrong nail; it just didn't enter my head."

"HALFWAY down the back drive I did exactly what you thought the murderer did. I stuck my truncheon well into the grass at the foot of the hedge and wiped all the mess off it. Then I slung it in place again and went on. There was no one about so I turned left and made off sharply through the lanes to Nyetson village."

"I was back home by half past eight and sat there pretending to read with my ears nailed to the door as you may say. 'Just after nine Lumsdale knocked, I let him in and he told me his alarming news. I hope my face looked serious and official enough. I tried to make it so anyway, and I walked up with him to see the first murder of my life (but my second view of it)."

"I want to make it clear, Inspector, that I didn't want anybody else to be charged with the crime, but I didn't see how there could be any evidence to charge anyone else. I don't pretend to know what I should have done if the circumstantial evidence had gone on mounting against Shipley the way it did."

"However, you feel a damned fool, Inspector, when you've jumped into the river to rescue someone and it turns out to be a dummy. I found out today that what Arthur Burdett said about my wife was absolutely true—so I needn't have killed him at all really, which is a pretty good joke on both of us when you come to think of it."

"Well, Inspector, that's the way of it. I knew it all before; shut my eyes to it and have had it proved abundantly again: Go your own way in life and trust yourself, nothing else is worth while. If you hadn't come in when you did this evening I should have killed Alice. You saved her, and much good that will do the world. I shan't kill her now. I couldn't very well hope to get away with that, and yet if I let her live she'll get me caught over the other thing, somehow or other in the devilish way women have in their minds she knows."

"Well, she won't have that pleasure. I've always lived life my own way and I'll go out of it my own way. James Clewley White."

Inspector Hylton read this remarkable and eminently lucid document slowly and with a series of mingled feelings such as he had seldom, if ever, before experienced. When he had finished it to its last syllable he gathered the loose sheets together and took them into the office, not caring particularly to share the company in the kitchen any longer. 'Poor devil' Hylton thought with compassion. Then lifting up the receiver, he asked in a wary voice for the Morechester Police Station. (Copyright, 1935, Laurence W. Meynell)

THE END

Ethel Barrymore Through Acting

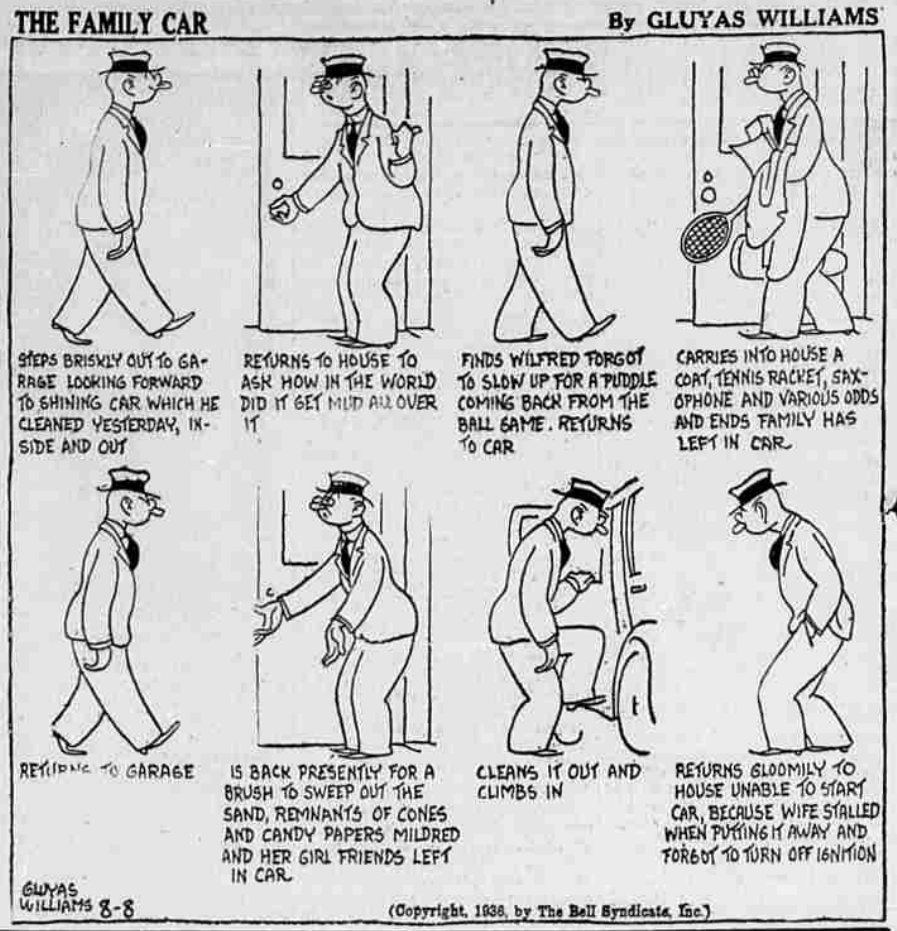
NEW YORK, Aug. 13.—(AP)—Ethel Barrymore, who came of a family rich in the traditions of the drama, but who attained fame in her own right on the stage and screen, looked forward today to a life of retirement in the country. 'I have made up my mind that I'm never going to appear in another play again,' she said last night during a radio broadcast.

POEM BY EX-WIFE IS FEATURE ON BIRTHDAY

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla., Aug. 13.—(AP)—When friends gave a surprise birthday party for Judge M. B. Hubbard, 87, his divorced wife, Mrs. Alice M. Horton was among the guests. During the celebration she recited a poem. It was "That Old Sweetheart of Mine."

THE FAMILY CAR

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



STEPS BRISKLY OUT TO GARAGE LOOKING FORWARD TO SHINING CAR WHICH HE CLEANED YESTERDAY, INSIDE AND OUT. RETURNS TO HOUSE TO ASK HOW IN THE WORLD DID IT GET MUD ALL OVER IT. FINDS WILFRED FORGOT TO SLOW UP FOR A PUDDLE COMING BACK FROM THE BALL GAME. RETURNS TO CAR. CARRIES INTO HOUSE A COAT, TENNIS RACKET, SAXOPHONE AND VARIOUS ODDS AND ENDS FAMILY HAS LEFT IN CAR. RETURNS GLOOMILY TO HOUSE UNABLE TO START CAR, BECAUSE WIFE STALLED WHEN PUTTING IT AWAY AND FORGOT TO TURN OFF IGNITION. IS BACK PRESENTLY FOR A BRUSH TO SWEEP OUT THE SAND, REMNANTS OF CONES AND CANDY PAPERS MILDRED AND HER GIRL FRIENDS LEFT IN CAR. CLEANS IT OUT AND CLIMBS IN. RETURNS TO GARAGE. REFLECTS TO GARAGE. STEPS BRISKLY OUT TO GARAGE LOOKING FORWARD TO SHINING CAR WHICH HE CLEANED YESTERDAY, INSIDE AND OUT.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



STEEPLECHASING ORIGINATED AS A HORSE RACE WITH A CHURCH STEEPLE AS ITS GOAL. Buttevant Church to the spire of St. Leger's Church, County Cork, Ireland.

KAYENTA, Arizona—IS 110 MILES FROM THE NEAREST RAILROAD, MORE DISTANT THAN ANY OTHER TOWN IN THE U.S.

DIATOMS—TINY SEA PLANTS OF WHICH 100 CAN FIT ON THE HEAD OF A PIN, ARE SO SYMMETRICAL THEY ARE USED TO TEST THE FINEST MICROSCOPES.

BATTLE TOWN—14 DIFFERENT CIVIL WAR ENGAGEMENTS WERE FOUGHT AT FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE!

8-12-36 Battle Town Strange as it seems, though only one battle in the history of the Civil War is now officially denoted as the Battle of Franklin, no less than 14 different military clashes occurred in this Tennessee town. Two of the battles fought there were of great importance—the first occurring on April 10, 1862, when the Federal forces under General Granger defeated Confederate forces led by General Van Don. The historical Battle of Franklin was fought on the outskirts of the war-torn town on November 30, 1864. Heavy casualties were incurred on both sides and as a result, oddly enough, the leaders of the Confederate and Union troops, General Hood of the former and General Wagner of the latter, were both relieved of their commands. Steeplechasing Leading sports authorities vary in their opinions regarding the date of the first steeplechase but agree that its locality was in Ireland with the race being run from Buttevant Church to the spire of St. Leger's Church in County Cork. It was from this horse race that the name of one modern steeplechase was derived, for the original was run across country, over fences, hedges and streams in the course that was run between the steeples of the two churches. Microscope Diatoms There are over 6000 species of the tiny diatom plant, each having a different pattern including almost every possible symmetrical figure from curves to straight lines. So nearly perfect is their proportional structure that they have come into wide usage as a test for the accuracy of microscopes. Tomorrow: Post Mortem Experiment.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—An Interruption



KEETER IS PUZZLED OVER THE ACTIONS OF THE GIRL MEMBER OF THE SKY BANDIT GANG... FIRST SHE SAVED HIM FROM BEING SHOT TO DEATH BY THE LEADER OF THE BANDITS... THEN SHE PLACED HIS LIFE IN JEOPARDY BY A LIE... MEANWHILE... LET'S RETURN TO TOMMY... THAT'S A BUS ROUNDING THE CURVE... DARN... EVERYTIME I START TO HAVE SOME FUN... SOMEBODY SPOILS IT... COME ON... LET'S SCRAM! WHAT ABOUT THIS GUY? WE'LL ATTEND TO HIM LATER... YEAH... AN' GIVE 'IM A CHANCE TO TALK... NOT MUCH... 'IM GONNA BLAST 'IM NOW...

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Ben's Plan



ISHMAEL AND AUNTY CHLOE HAVE BEEN KIDNAPED! OH BEN, THOSE RUFFIANS ARE TRYING TO TERRIFY US... AND WE HAVE ONE OF THE ANWFUL CREATURES UPSTAIRS! COME HERE, BRIARGIE—WAIT A SECOND, MRS. MONTROSE—TOMORROW, LET'S PRETEND WE'VE BEEN FRIGHTENED AWAY— THEN I CAN COME BACK ALONE TOMORROW NIGHT— YOU'LL DO NOTHING OF THE KIND, YOUNG MAN! I'LL COME BACK WITH YOU!

THE NERBS—Unwelcome Guest



I'LL GO INTO MY DEN—THERE'S A NICE COOL WEST BREEZE TONIGHT—IT'S THE COOLEST ROOM IN THE HOUSE... SWEET CINNAMON! THERE HE IS AND IN MY DEN!! WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY PARKING YOUR BROTHER IN MY DEN? WOMAN, WE HAVE LIVED TOGETHER FOR YEARS IN SEMI-DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY BUT THERE ISNT ROOM FOR THAT GUY AND ME EVEN IN THE STATE OF TEXAS AND IF YOU DONT GET HIM OUT OF HERE WE'LL MAKING FACES AT EACH OTHER IN A DROCK COURT... PURPOSELY YOU PARK HIM IN A ROOM A CROCODILE WOULD SUFFOCATE IN AND WHEN I MAKE HIM A BIT COMFORTABLE IT'S GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE SO THAT'S ALL THE AFFECTION YOU HAVE FOR ME? I COST YOU TWO DOLLARS FOR A MARRIAGE LICENSE—YOU CAN GET OUT OF IT FOR NOTHING.

PHYSICAL EXAMS URGED FOR PUPILS

PORTLAND, Aug. 13.—(AP)—A warning to parents against allowing their children start school without a thorough examination, so that they may be free from avoidable handicaps, came today from the Oregon board of health. The board pointed out that the average child loses about seven per cent of his school time, or two weeks, because of preventable defects which not only hinder his school progress but cause injury to his future health. These are listed as the common cold, dental defects, adenoids, defective vision, poor nutrition, and certain constitutional disorders. The weekly chart of communicable diseases throughout the state revealed whooping cough to be the most prevalent ailment. There were 27 new cases, concentrated principally in Multnomah, Washington, Marion, Polk and Benton counties.

COAST AIR MAIL PROVES POPULAR

In exchanging approximately 17,000,000 air mail letters during the first six months of this year, Medford and other Pacific Coast cities surpassed any other section of the country on a per capita basis for air mail use, according to advice received today by L. G. Devaney, field manager of United Air Lines here, from his Chicago headquarters. The total given, Devaney said, was chalked up on both the overnight and daylight schedules of United between Seattle, Medford and San Diego, with a substantially better showing on a per capita basis than that recorded by air lines of the Atlantic seaboard. Under present coastwise air mail schedules, elapsed times from Medford to other cities are as follows: Portland, 1 hr., 32 min.; Seattle, 2 hrs., 52 min.; Sacramento, 1 hr., 55 min.; Oakland, 2 hrs., 8 min.; San Francisco, 2 hrs., 28 min.; Fresno, 3 hrs., 45 min.; Bakersfield, 4 hrs., 37 min.; Los Angeles, 4 hrs., 43 min., and San Diego, 5 hrs., 48 min.