

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

...The davenport was turned before the fire and a heavy chair drawn up beside it, so that both were turned from the hall and game-room doors. With the aid of a couple of steamer rugs and many pillows, Gay swiftly constructed an amazing semblance of three people dozing before the fire. I suppose we had all done that very thing a dozen times, but we watched it now with an anticipatory glee. We were in deadly earnest. I for one was thinking, "She's clever. She keeps her head and thinks of details. And she's the only one above suspicion. The only one!"

"There!" said Gay with finality. "Mike, throw some logs on the fire. I think that will do."

Michael moved to obey her. "The only trouble is," he said, "that this will be a pretty obvious gag if anyone happens to look through the windows. And it would sound damned fishy in front of a jury."

I reflected that practically anything could do in the way of fooling the murderer would be twisted against us later, if his cunning succeeded in involving us.

"We'll have to take some risks," said Gay; but she went back over her handiwork, creating a fair illusion of three people given to sleeping with their heads under blankets.

"Let's get going," said Michael.

At the door an unexpected problem presented itself. We no sooner stepped into the hall than a loud clatter of swing echoed through the entire house. William or anyone else would have to be deaf not to know that a door had been opened. I took a wild shot.

I said very loudly, "All the hall lights are on. Shall I douse them?"

"Mike stepped back into the room," he shouted, "leave them on!"

I closed the door after him with a careful hand. There was of course a very good chance that William had been watching us through the keyhole of either the library or the dining room door or even through the crack of the door to the servants' hall. He could command a good two-thirds of the first floor from the kitchen without once coming into the hall. But there was no help for it and none of the doors had moved.

Chapter 36 To Fool the Killer

THE whole question of M. Farrington's accident was thrown into a hopeless jumble. Higgins' extraordinary behavior with regard to the fingerprint on the revolver might be explained as nervousness. Cook might have used that gun from M. Farrington's doorway, left it in the hall, walked a few paces toward the servants' corridor, and turned, giving the appearance of having rushed out at the sound of the shot. The fact that both the Skipper and Higgins offered the same alibi rather tended to substantiate this theory. Could the Skipper, later on, have left M. Farrington alone with Cook, and might Cook have augmented the sleeping powder with a preparation of her own? Had Cook in some mysterious way lured the Skipper to whatever fate she had encountered?

It seemed rather senseless. Cook had been at the Bluff for several years without any such outbreak. What possible motive could she have for embarking on a career of wholesale slaughter? It was doubtful that she had even heard of Jude Blinshop before that weekend. She had certainly not recognized her assailant in the kitchen. To the best of our knowledge, she did not even know of the poor lunatic's presence in the house. How, then, would she have known that there was anyone concealed in Jude's room? And why would she bother to annihilate him, even if she had?

"Has William had any dinner, Annie?" said Michael suddenly.

"No, sir."

"Go tell him to get some now. Would you mind staying with Miss Farrington for a little while until one of us comes up?"

The alacrity with which Annie leapt at the suggestion was amazing. Whatever terror the house held for her was seemingly not increased by being left alone on the upper floor with the sick woman. She rushed up the stairs eagerly.

"It stands to reason," said Mike heavily, "that the house can't be full of homicidal maniacs."

Gay giggled. "If it comes to that, it stands to reason that all this can't have happened in your own house. Try again, Mike."

Michael sat up. "We have enough evidence to hang almost anyone in this house. That shows pretty good thinking on someone's part. After all, I'd say on the part of the person against whom there's been no evidence."

"But there's been no evidence against me!" began Gay indignantly.

Michael eyed her coolly. "Precisely. And you have been the person who's so hot to have almost anybody confess. Does that suggest anything to anyone's mind?"

"Why—? Gay stared at him in blank amazement. "Why—? Are you suggesting that I—?"

The upward swing in her voice brought me to my feet.

"Of course he isn't!" I said loudly. "Now, I'm suggesting that we get down to business. William will be down in a minute. Why don't you three of us start now and go inch by inch over every bedroom in this house? We might find something helpful."

The Radio As A Blind

I think we would have been in for a spirited debate, but the sound of William's footsteps on the back stairs brought them to a quick decision.

"Let's," said Gay, simultaneously with Mike's grunted assent.

Silently we headed into the hall, taking care that the kitchen door was not left swinging after us. One thing that none of us relished was the idea of William prowling through the deserted house on our trail—William, Higgins, or anyone else. At the foot of the main stairs, Michael, finger to lips, beckoned us into the living room. We followed him on tiptoe and he closed the door softly after us.

"The radio," he whispered. "Turn it on for a blind."

I had forgotten that there was a radio at the Bluff. Why the dickens hadn't he thought of it during those unspeakable hours of waiting? Mike is not usually a person for details. I watched him in that silence as he turned on the radio and most of the lights in the room with it.

"Wait," Gay whispered. "Help me move this davenport, Jim. Now the chair. That's it!" Working rapidly,

ST. PETER MARBLE PILLARS TOPPLE

VATICAN CITY, June 16.—(AP)—Huge sections of several of the enormous marble pillars inside St. Peter's, the world's largest cathedral, crashed to the pavement today.

The falling blocks of marble did not endanger tourists. Edgemo Co. (Italy) Paicelli, the Vatican secretary of state, and Monsignor Luigi Pellizzo, secretary of the cathedral building committee, took immediate steps to insure the safety of visitors.

Monsignor Pellizzo ordered a thorough inspection of all columns inside the cathedral.

Vatican engineers said the marble fragments probably were loosened by sudden changes in the temperature during the past several days.

WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably. Telephone Can. 1257 Works.

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SUSPECT HELD AT SALEM RELEASED

SALEM, June 16.—(AP)—William Meyers, who has been held in jail here for 14 days as a murder suspect on information from Pennsylvania authorities, was released today by order of Justice of the Peace Miller D. Hayden. The release order was issued when Hayden was informed by Pennsylvania state police officers that the identity of two men named William Meyers had been confused, and that the Salem man was not the man wanted.

Information from the navy department relative to the two men, both of whom they said deserted from the navy a short time after the world war led to the confusion, Justice of the Peace Hayden said.

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STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

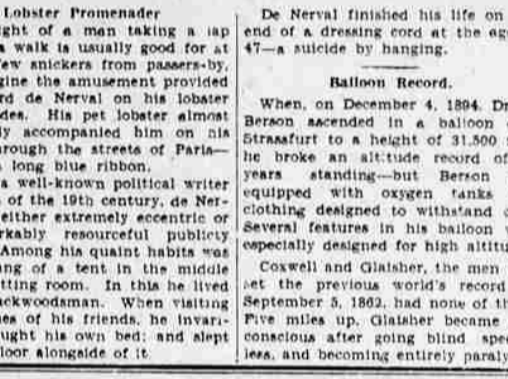
For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

THE FAMOUS CLEOPATRA, lover of Antony, WAS THE 6TH EGYPTIAN QUEEN OF THAT NAME



WITHOUT OXYGEN TANKS OR SPECIAL EQUIPMENT OF ANY KIND, A BALLOON ASCENSION OF 29,000 FEET WAS MADE BY COXWELL AND GLAISHER IN 1862 IN ENGLAND THE RECORD STOOD FOR 32 YEARS

GERARD DE NERVAL—eccentric 19th-century writer, CUSTOMARILY WALKED THROUGH THE STREETS OF PARIS LEADING A LOBSTER ON A RIBBON... HE CARRIED HIS OWN BED WITH HIM ON VISITS—BUT SLEPT ON THE FLOOR BESIDE IT!



Lobster Promenader
The sight of a man taking a lap dog for a walk is usually good for at least a few snickers from passers-by, but imagine the amusement provided by Gerard de Nerval on his lobster promenades. His pet lobster almost invariably accompanied him on his walks through the streets of Paris—led by a long blue ribbon.

Balloon Record.
When, on December 4, 1862, Dr. A. Berson ascended in a balloon over Straasfurt to a height of 31,500 feet, he broke an altitude record of 32 years standing—Berson was equipped with oxygen tanks and clothing designed to withstand cold. Several features in his balloon were especially designed for high altitudes.

Cleopatra.
Cleopatra was a title rather than a name. It was adopted by most of the queens of Egypt during the Ptolemaic reign. Five "Cleopatras" preceded the famous Cleopatra who loved Anthony and ended her life with an asp.

Trans-America Dividend.
SAN FRANCISCO, June 16.—(AP)—Transamerica corporation's subsidiary Bankamerica Agricultural Credit corporation announced today it will pay a special dividend of \$25,000 to stockholders on June 29, on records of June 26.

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A CATERPILLAR'S FIRST MEAL IS OFTEN ITS OWN EMPTY EGG SHELL



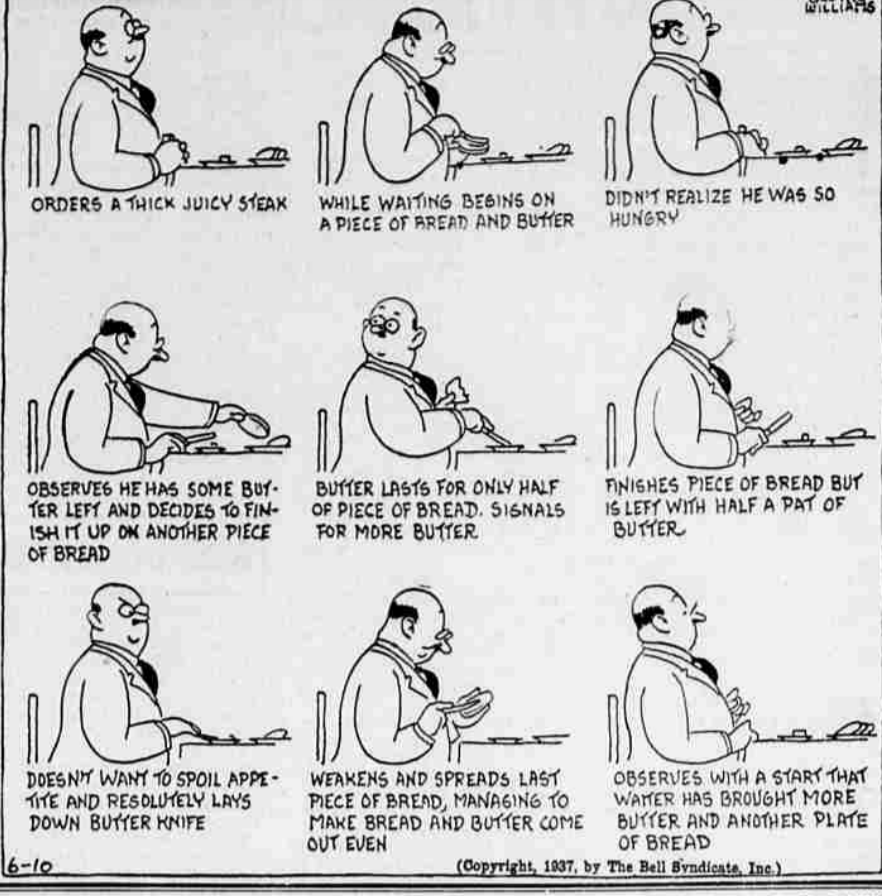
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BREAD AND BUTTER



SMATTER POP



TAILSPIN TOMMY—So What, Tommy?



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Ouch! It's Here!



THE NEBBS—Faithful Fido



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