

Stymied in their efforts to find a good lead, the local police referred the murder to Scotland Yard, whose distinguished superintendent, John Sands, investigated the case personally. After he had talked to several of the neighbors and heard the gossip, Sands went to visit Chaplin, whose home was one of the finest in Wimbledon.

Chaplin welcomed his illustrious guest, ushered him into the library, and went off to brew a pot of tea. Idly, Sands examined Chaplin's collection of books, including early editions of Conan Doyle, Edgar Allan Poe, and many others. He rifled through some of the volumes until Chaplin brought the tea.

They talked for an hour, but Chaplin threw no light on the murder of Casserly, and Sands finally left. The next day, Chaplin was summoned to Scotland Yard and ushered into Sands' office.

"Georgiana Casserly is a very beautiful woman," the superintendent began.

Chaplin nodded. "It's sad that she was bereaved in the bloom of womanhood," he said. "So young to be left alone."

"The neighbors are wagering she won't be alone very long," Sands said. "They say you will marry her within the year."

Chaplin admitted he was in love with the young widow.

"As a matter of fact," said Sands, "that's why you murdered her husband!"

"I? That's absurd!" Chaplin cried. "Percy was my best friend."

"Perhaps," Sands agreed. "But you wanted his wife, and you couldn't have her until he was out of the way. So you shot him and tried to make it look like robbery."

"That's ridiculous! I never owned a gun."

SANDS LOOKED UP as the door opened. An officer came in and handed him a .32 caliber revolver. Chaplin's face paled.

"I have no doubt," said Sands, "that this will prove to be the murder weapon."

"Where did you get it?"

"From your basement wall," the officer explained. "As soon as you left home, we looked for fresh masonry in the basement. I found a spot and broke through it. The gun was there."

Chaplin signed a confession, admitting he had decided murder was the only way of possessing the wife of his friend. "But how did you know where to look for the gun?" he asked.

"When I was riffling through the books in your home yesterday," said Sands, "I picked up a volume of Edgar Allan Poe. One story had been thumbed more than any of the others."

"The story was *The Black Cat* and I remembered how the killer had concealed evidence in the basement wall. You are an accomplished stonemason and it would be easy for you to hide a gun in the wall. I was convinced then that you had killed Percy Casserly. So I got you down here while my man went to your home and found the evidence."

Chaplin died on the gallows.



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