

# MURDER By An ARISTOCRAT

Mignon G. Eberhart

Emmeline probably did not understand her, for Janice shouted, "Blood pressure, Hilary," and I went reluctantly away.

The cemetery. Well, that was a peaceful enough errand. But it did occur to me that the Thatchers took an unusual and peculiar interest in cemeteries. Although, in view of the fact that there was about to be an addition to the family burial plot, Adela's interest was perhaps not incomprehensible.

Thinking that Emmeline might be mistaken, I went to Adela's room and knocked. When she did not reply I opened the door cautiously and then more boldly. The bed was empty, Adela was certainly gone. The dog, Pansy, got up wearily from her corner and waddled over to me, sniffing suspiciously and puffing as if she had asthma. A dog's barking had awakened me; it must have been Pansy, left alone. Adela, then, had been gone for some time.

It was an hour or so yet before the inquest. I went downstairs again and out to the wide porch. There were chairs out there, and it was pleasant and cool out of the sun, although the morning gave promise of an unusually hot and stifling day.

Higby was not to be seen, and the lawn was deserted save for the birds bathing and drinking and fluttering their wings under the gentle spray of the lawn sprinkler which someone had turned on. Death and murder might visit that house, but its routine was unchanging.

Back of me, from the depths of the house I could hear an occasional murmur of voices and the frequent ringing of the telephone; several cars drove slowly past with their occupants craning their necks to stare at me and at the house, although no one stopped—I suppose Adela had never encouraged the informality of early morning calls—and presently Allen came out with a sheaf of telegraph blanks in one hand. He did not see me, and strode briskly along the turf path, his crisp light hair shining in the sun, his tall body lean and lithe and young.

Sitting there, I had my first opportunity to weigh and sift, so to speak, the evidence I possessed.

There is also this about murder: I discovered it during the Thatcher case: Every man becomes a hunter. I could not have helped making every effort to discover the identity of the person who killed Bayard Thatcher—who had deliberately taken the life of a fellow man. It is not a mere matter of vulgar prying into other people's affairs. Not in the least. It is exactly as if a tiger had escaped and were preying upon human life. It is a matter of self-preservation: The tiger must be discovered and captured.

On reflection it seemed to me there were three major considerations. There was first the problem of whether or not all of them—Adela and Hilary and Evelyn and Emmeline and Janice—yes, and even Higby—were telling the truth. If they were telling the truth, Evelyn had left Bayard alive, Emmeline had found him dead, and only Janice and Emmeline had been inside the house in that short interval. Besides, of course, the highly problematic burglar.

Second, if they were not telling the truth, the problem of the identity of the murderer was still limited to the immediate family circle of Adela, Hilary, Evelyn, Janice, and Emmeline. And, of course, Higby. There had been no one else about.

Unless, and here was my third consideration, unless

Higby and Emmeline were both lying to the same purpose and someone had entered the house at the back, unknown to me. I knew that Emmeline, Higby, and I between us commanded a view of the entire house, and that one of us could scarcely have failed to see any intruder coming or going. Much, it seemed to me, hinged upon the truth of their testimony.

There was, too, ever in my consciousness the fact of Bayard's having been wounded by a revolver shot only a day or so before he'd been killed. He had known that first attack for what it was, and I reproached myself for having been so loath to credit his statement. Still, I had urged him to protect himself, to leave. And that very afternoon he had been killed.

The family knew, in all likelihood, who had fired that first shot that wounded Bayard's shoulder. It was not probable that there were two people intent upon doing away with Bayard Thatcher. If I could discover who made that first attack—but they wouldn't tell. None of the Thatchers would tell.

And there were other things that seemed to me highly significant. Why did I hear—that calm afternoon—no sound of the shot? Why were Bayard's eyes closed? Who had tried to enter his room that first night? Why was there blood on the wrong rug?

And was there a possibility that it was a burglar after all? If not, what had happened to the diamonds?

Then there was the problem of Janice and the revolver and the egg basket. Janice and her presence in the house alone with Bayard for the 10 minutes or so immediately preceding the discovery of his death. Janice and the mysterious letter. Had the letter any possible bearing upon the situation? I must find some way to return the letter to her.

It seems unbelievable now to think that, from the very beginning, I had the key to the puzzle in my own hands. And didn't know it. Did not recognize it for what it was. It was all so simple, so dreadfully simple once I recognized that clue, and it was a mere matter of recognition.

When I finally returned to Adela's room I was a little astonished to find her sitting calmly, talking to Janice. She was dressed in plain white and looked weary but cold and a little severe, with her gold-rimmed eyeglasses and her white gloves and delicate handkerchief at hand. As I asked her if she felt well, she replied in the coolest affirmative and told me it was time for me to prepare to go with them to the inquest.

"Did Evelyn go home?" she asked Janice.

"Just to change her dress. She'll be back soon."

"Well, you'd better get ready at once, Miss Keate. Allen will take us all in the big car. We'll meet Hilary at the courthouse, I suppose. We are all rather anxious to get it over. Not a pleasant affair."

How well I remember Adela's deliberately elegant voice calling it "not a pleasant affair." It was odd, that inquest. Odd, but after all not much happened. Not much, perhaps, with Dr. Boulligny presiding, could happen. It all lasted barely half an hour.

It was held in the old courthouse, C— being, as perhaps I have indicated, the county seat. The main street of the town, as we drove through it a few moments before 10, looked like a market day, it was so full of automobiles belonging to the farmers who had driven in to talk of the news and to attend the

inquest. I daresay they felt a little cheated at the brevity of the proceedings in the packed courtroom. But I doubt if those old walls ever held a half hour so crowded with secret drama. It was not, however, until much later that I knew the true significance of those careful questions, and those cautious, guarded replies.

I sat, of course, with the family. It was something to witness their determined calm, their dignity of bearing; to note the manner with which they met the nods and looks and subdued greetings of their neighbors and acquaintances. There was no condescension in the Thatcher manner, no patronage; at the same time, there was something which said: "This dreadful thing has happened to us, it's true. We admit it openly. But we are still Thatchers."

An analyst would have said their very manner admitted the thing they were so determined to keep hidden. But I am not an analyst, and it was only later that I received that.

Inwardly I was shocked at the cut-and-dried way in which Dr. Boulligny and Hilary between them managed to hurry the inquest along. It was done so deftly and so adroitly that it almost convinced me—would have quite convinced me had I not known what I knew—and the jury did not even leave the room to make its decision that Bayard Thatcher met his death at the hands of an unknown person. Much was made, and in a most effective way, of the loss of the Thatcher diamonds, of which everyone in the room seemed to know.

Only once did anything threaten to break through that carefully built up fabric of supposition. That was when one of the jurors, a farmer with a weatherbeaten face and shrewd gray eyes, asked rather hesitantly if it wasn't true that Bayard Thatcher had been shot in the shoulder just a day or so before he was killed.

"The question," said Dr. Boulligny in a stately way, "is irrelevant. However," he added quickly, as the farmer appeared about to speak again, "he was. It is no secret. He was cleaning a revolver, and it went off accidentally, wounding him slightly. I myself was the attending physician. I know exactly how it happened. It has nothing at all to do with a burglar shooting him yesterday. Higby, we'll have your testimony now."

And Higby's testimony, under Dr. Boulligny's inquiries, emphasized the fact that the lawnmower had been a noisy one, that he'd been at some distance from the house during the late afternoon, and that in traversing the lawn back and forth all that long afternoon there had been many times when his back was turned to the library windows.

"But not long enough for anybody to cross the lawn and get the screen off a window and get into the house without I saw him," muttered Higby stubbornly. His meaning was clearer than his syntax, and Dr. Boulligny wound him up rather hurriedly and sent him back to his seat. And Adela, beside me, touched her blue lips with a delicately laced handkerchief.

My own testimony was equally brief, and when, after asking me only a very obvious question or two, Dr. Boulligny dismissed me with thanks I caught Hilary giving Dr. Boulligny a relieved and distinctly congratulatory glance.

As I say, the decision was very prompt. Riding home in the sedan at the side of Adela, I reflected that at least no one had come out openly to accuse any of the Thatcher family of murder. There would undoubtedly be talk; I could see it even then in the glances, the bent heads, the whispers, the way the groups on the sidewalks stopped talk-

ing and watched us pass, but at least the inquest was safely over. And I thought of Adela's despairing cry, "What will people say?"

The sheriff followed us home, and I sat and listened while Adela gave a description of the vanished diamonds. I can still hear her deliberate voice:

"One ring, set with a carat diamond, a blue Jaegar, and two pearls."

And Jim Strove scratching away in a notebook: "How do you spell Jaegar?"

"Two carat Wesseltons set in a ring with a design of clasped hands. One necklace, 11 diamonds. One sunburst, 26—oh, but you would know my mother's sunburst anywhere, Mr. Strove. You've seen her wear it hundreds of times."

"Oh, sure, Miss Adela. But I've got to telegraph this all over the country. You'll have to give me a more detailed description of the stones. Don't you have a written record? A jeweler's—"

"Yes. Yes. Very well. One sunburst—"

On and on it went, emblematic of a time when a family was scarcely a family until it had collected a certain amount of land, silver, and diamonds. The collection was not enormous, and none of the pieces was very valuable; still, all put together it was nothing to be sneezed at.

I left them presently and went to my own room to change from the street gown I had worn at the inquest. I found Florrie there, her stolidity shaken and her hair a bit wild. She was changing the bed, flourishing the sheets widely. She gave a little gasp when I entered.

"Do you mind, ma'am," she said, "if I finish the room while you are here?" And as I said no, she continued, "I'm late about things this morning. Seems like I'm kind of nervous. Keep feeling like something's coming at me from behind."

"Nonsense. Not in broad daylight."

She gave me a slow look.

"It happened yesterday in broad daylight," she said, shaking out a pillow case.

Well, of course that was true.

"And—" she added, holding the pillow by one corner between her teeth and speaking through them—her teeth, I mean—so that her words had a sort of hissing ferocity—"it can happen again."

"Nonsense," I repeated. And because I rather agreed with her than otherwise I said briskly, "Nothing is going to happen. You're a little nervous, that's all."

"And who wouldn't be nervous?" she asked fiercely. "A man shot all to pieces in the very house. Mark my words, ma'am, it ain't going to end there. You see," she added, releasing the pillow and speaking with greater clearness "I'm a seventh daughter."

"A seventh daughter! De you mean a Native daughter? Or a Daughter of the Revolution? Or a— By the way, hasn't Miss Thatcher told you not to hold pillows between your teeth like that?"

"Yes," she admitted. "But when I get excited I sort of forget. It's lots easier. The seventh daughter of a seventh daughter."

It began to sound like a lodge. She picked up the other pillow, caught it expertly between her teeth, and hissed, "I see things!"

"You see things! What on earth—"

She took the pillow out of her mouth and said, "I mean I see things. I've got second sight. That is, sometimes I have second sight. And I've got it right now. I see trouble."

Her earnestness was rather convincing. I was a little taken aback and vaguely uneasy in the face of such certainty. "Why, you can't!" I cried. "That's all nonsense."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

## Good Bread High in Food Values

Bread in some form or another has been from the beginning of civilization an important contribution to the nutrition of mankind. After man discovered that he could grind wild grain into meal, mix this with water and bake bread between hot stones, he began the cultivation of grain for food and the establishment of a settled home.

It was centuries later that the use of "leaven" was discovered. Bread in anything like its modern form is said to have been first made by the Egyptians. The first bread was merely cakes of coarsely ground meal held together by water. A great variety of grain was and is used for bread. In this country we find wheat bread is used almost to the exclusion of other grains. Most of this bread is made from refined wheat flour, known as "white" flour. In France and England this is the favorite bread. In the other countries of Europe we find rye bread, known in some places as black bread, used largely.

"A fine white loaf" was a symbol of luxury food, and used only by the great until the last centuries, when large scale milling operations began to produce fine white flour in large quantities. Within a much shorter space of time commercial bakeries turning out thousands of loaves of bread each day have taken over the task of baking bread for large communities. The majority of this bread is made from white flour and the quality produced is often excellent, sometimes much better than the average loaf of home-made bread. Large scale operations has put the loaf on the market at a cost which little more than covers the cost of the material and fuel for a home-baked loaf. Prices per pound differ, depending largely upon the other ingredients besides flour used in its preparation. "Milk" bread is preferable from the food value standpoint.

We depend upon bread for a goodly percentage of the calories needed daily in our diet. We get from it an appreciable amount of protein. Bread, made as it is from a good quality wheat, with the addition of shortening, milk and yeast, is a valuable food for the sake of its "fuel" and protein. It is also so easy for digestion that it is completely utilized. At the same time it is an inexpensive source of food.

Bread must, of course, be supplemented by other foods which provide more protein, minerals and vitamins. In a well-varied diet we will get the supplements easily from extra milk, meat, eggs and vegetables and fruits. Whole wheat bread is of higher value in minerals, especially iron, and in vitamin B, than white bread. It is not so generally popular as white bread, but it is a good plan to use it to some extent in the weekly meal plan. Where the money to be spent for food is too limited in amount to allow of the purchase of liberal amounts of the more expensive foods, whole wheat bread should be counted upon to provide iron and vitamin B.

From the nutritive points of menus we should not discount the contribution of bread to the diet. We hear so much about the value of fruits, vegetables and milk that we somehow forget the importance of this inexpensive food.

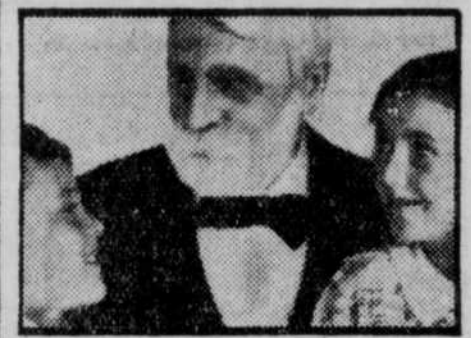
### Pineapple Betty.

- 1 can crushed pineapple
- 2 cups dry fine bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter
- ½ cup sugar

Drain pineapple and reserve juice. Grate or roll crumbs and

cook in butter until yellow. Add sugar to crumbs and mix well. Sprinkle greased baking dish with one-third of the crumbs. Arrange pineapple and rest of crumbs in alternate layers and pour juice over pudding. Bake in a hot oven (450 degrees Fahrenheit) twenty to thirty minutes. Serve with hard sauce.

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## BOWELS need watching

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## BONFIRES AIDED PIONEER PILOTS

Chicago — (UP) — While the Lindbergh and other successful trans-oceanic flights are most vivid in the public's mind, pioneers in the industry are recalling the 12th anniversary of a flight made by air mail pilots, which wrote history in 1921 by flying the first continuous coast-to-coast

schedule, much of it at night, over airways lighted by bonfires.

Prior to the winter of 1921 air letters were flown by day and trained at night on the New York-San Francisco route, then as now, the backbone line of the air network. To convince Congress of the time savings which were made by flying at night as well as by day, if the airway was lighted, a group of air mail pilots volunteered to push the mail across the country in a continuous flight.

Thirty-three and a half hours for the flight, had commenced

at San Francisco, the mail was landed in New York.

That first night flight was the forerunner of today's dusk-to-dawn flying and on the New York-San Francisco route United Air Lines now flies 4,000,000 miles annually at night, making possible a one business day service across the states.

## Streamlines Rule For Air Hostesses

Chicago — (UP) — A girl can't be

fat if she wants to be employed as a stewardess on the big coast-to-coast air liners. United Air Lines' requirements are that its stewardesses, who serve as the third member of the crew on its 27-hour coast-to-coast planes, must be between 20 and 30 years of age, and weigh not more than 130 pounds. Their average height is about five feet, five inches.

Stewardesses must be well educated, and, incidentally, the line reports there are 2 applicants for every position.