

MURDER By An ARISTOCRAT

Mignon G. Eberhart

"Nonsense, Miss Keate! Why should anyone do that? I hope you aren't suggesting that someone tried to—kill Florrie. That isn't reasonable. Aside from the fact that no one in the house—oh, it's quite absurd even to consider it!—had any reason to kill Florrie, nobody could have known ahead of time that she would have a headache and wouldn't be able to find as common a thing as aspirin anywhere in the house and would finally come to you for it and get the veronal instead. And that she would take enough of it to kill her. Really, Miss Keate, that's going too far!" He ended with a sort of explosion, his face very pink and his eyes ugly.

"Keep your temper, Hilary," said Dr. Bouigny quickly. "Don't get excited like that. Miss Keate doesn't think anyone tried to kill Florrie with veronal. That would be altogether too far-fetched. But, Miss Keate, who has had access to your instrument bag?"

"Everyone in the house, I imagine. I left it in the bathroom off Bayard Thatcher's room until I was asked to care for Miss Thatcher, immediately after his death. Then I went into his room and got the bag and left it in the bathroom adjoining Miss Thatcher's room."

"Was that entirely safe?" asked Hilary unpleasantly.

"Safe! I don't see why not! There's nothing in it but dressings, bandage scissors, thermometers, a bottle of alcohol, a rubber sheet—"

"There, there, now, Miss Keate. Mr. Thatcher isn't accusing you of carelessness. Your own accusation that someone in this house removed the harmless aspirin in that box and substituted veronal is far more serious. Have you any real reason to suspect your instrument bag has been tampered with?"

"Yes."

"What's that? What do you mean?" cried Hilary.

"I—it was—well, I know someone—tampered with it."

"Who? How do you know?"

"I found something in it. Something—unimportant. I restored it to its owner."

Hilary was leaning forward; his face faintly purple.

"You'll have to explain yourself, Miss Keate. You have said too much not to say more."

"I'll do no such thing. That had nothing to do with the veronal. As a matter of fact, every single one of you had access to it. And your own sister suggested that I give Florrie aspirin."

"My sister! Janice?"

"No."

"Adela! Good God, Miss Keate, you are out of your senses!" Hilary had leaped to his feet, a bizarre fat figure in agitated purple stripes.

"Do you hear her, Dan? She's out of her senses. She's a dangerous woman. She ought to be removed. Put where she can't do any damage. Adela! She says Adela gave Florrie veronal."

"I said nothing of the kind," I cried, shocked. "I meant nothing of the kind. I said she suggested I give Florrie veronal—I mean, aspirin—and I did. I wanted you to understand that I didn't offer it to her voluntarily. I had nothing at all to do with it. Somebody here put veronal in that box. I didn't. And I'll not be accused of it."

"There now, Miss Keate," said Dr. Bouigny heavily. "Do cool down, Hilary. You ought not permit yourself to get in such rages."

"Not permit myself," sputtered Hilary, quite beside himself. "When she sits and looks at me like that. I'll not

—" said Hilary—"be looked at."

"Well, I don't see how you are going to help it," said Dr. Bouigny rather wearily. "What was it you found in your instrument bag, Miss Keate? To whom did you return it?"

That took the wind out of my sails; it is very difficult for a nurse of many years' experience to refuse to answer a doctor's question.

I looked past the narrow bed where Florrie lay, her face more natural, her breath coming and going heavily, out through the gable window. Dawn was touching the tree-tops with gold, and I thought of the other two dawns I had seen in that house. A cool breath of morning air billowed the ruffled curtain and touched my hot, tired face. It had been a dreadful night, a night to sap one's energies, to test one's stamina, to try one's courage to the utmost.

Dr. Bouigny was watching me anxiously, his heavy hand rubbing his dark, unshaven chin. Hilary was breathing heavily, his face still flushed, and his eyes narrow and wary.

"Come, Miss Keate," urged Dr. Bouigny. "Who was it?"

"What does it matter?" I said wearily. "We've saved the girl. That's the main thing."

"What was it you found in your bag? Tell us at once." Hilary's voice was sharply commanding. It annoyed me.

"I prefer," I said loftily, "not to tell. It was nothing that could have any connection at all with this. I returned it to the owner, and even the owner does not know I saw—found it. I'm sorry I spoke of it. I only did so to prove that my instrument bag was quite accessible to other people besides myself. I refuse to say any more. If I were questioned in a court of law, of course—"

Hilary's face flushed darker.

"You'd tell, then, I don't doubt," he said nastily. "Well, this isn't going to get to a court of law. Not this trouble with Florrie. And as for anything else you may know about our family affairs, nurse, you aren't going to have a chance to tell that in a court of law either. You can be sure of that."

"Hilary," said Dr. Bouigny in some exasperation, "I'll swear you go out of your way to be a plain damn fool. Your temper and your tongue are going to get you into bad trouble some day, if they haven't already. Can't you see that you are alienating—"

I didn't see that Dr. Bouigny was making matters any better. Perhaps it was fortunate that Janice interrupted just when she did. She said, "Hilary," and we all turned and saw her in the doorway. I wondered how long she'd been standing there. I could tell nothing from her steady dark eyes and her white face.

"Adela wants you," she went on. "You, too, Dr. Dan. I'm afraid she'll collapse if we don't get her to sleep. She's determined to go through with the funeral. It's morning. You'd better go to her at once."

The two men pulled themselves to their feet. Dr. Bouigny murmured a direction or two about Florrie and said he's back later in the day, and not to let her get pneumonia. He did have the grace to add a sort of apology about overworking me and that it was fortunate I was there and had known what to do for the girl. Hilary said nothing. I could hear the muffled sound of their voices as they went down the narrow stairway, and I caught the words "dangerous enemy" in Hilary's

voice. I had no doubt he referred to me.

Janice had walked to the window and was standing there, her back to me. There was a long moment of silence with the sound of the descending footsteps of the men growing fainter. It was a peaceful silence, with the cool summer dawn filling the room, dispelling the horror of the dreadful, hot night. Janice's voice, when it came, was calm too, but it was the calm of great weariness and of final surrender. She said:

"So you knew about the letter. My letter."

CHAPTER XI

The unconscious girl on the bed moaned stupidly, and I went to her.

Presently I said:

"Yes."

"And you returned it to me? Placed it there on my desk?"

"Yes."

"It was—you found it there in your instrument bag?"

"Yes."

"And—read it?" There was pain in the reluctant question, pain and pride. Janice could always face things. She was standing quiet; her dark hair hung down her back like a child's—it was not long and it ended in a soft dark confusion of loose curls. The dressing gown she wore, the pale yellow chiffon in which I had first seen her, fell softly about her slender young figure. I longed to say I had not read the letter.

"Yes, I read it."

"But you didn't tell. You didn't tell."

"No. I've never felt that duty demands a free tongue."

"Then you don't think—you don't think I'm—"

She stopped. It was a moment before I realized she was trying to keep back sobs. The night we had had was enough to break even Janice's steel-like self-control; I did not think the less of her.

"No," I said. "No, I don't think anything, you poor child!"

She turned then, very slowly, tears in her dark eyes and on her soft cheeks.

I squirmed. I don't like tears, and besides, there was a lump in my throat that hurt. I said:

"We are both exhausted after such a night. Sit down and we'll talk quietly. I've had enough of emotions for one night."

She gave me a long look.

"No," she said. "I've said enough. One reaches a point where one must talk. It was good of you not to tell. I'm trying, you see, to do what I think is right. But I'd better tell you. You see, I had written that letter to explain to Allen how I felt. It was so difficult to tell him. And Bayard found the letter. Took the letter, rather; saw me place it in the pocket of Allen's coat and deliberately took it. Somehow, though, he had managed to get only the second sheet of it—but that was enough. And Bayard—I wonder what you know of Bayard, Miss Keate. He was—"

"Predatory," I said out of my memory. She looked at me with surprise.

"I don't know how you know that," she said, "but it is true. Terribly true. You see, Bayard—it's hard to tell it, Miss Keate."

"Blackmailed you, I suppose. Or tried to."

"Yes," she said faintly. "Yes. He threatened to tell Dave. Adela, Evelyn and Hilary. By that time everyone would have known it. Oh—I can't tell you how awful it would have been." She covered her face with her hands.

"I can imagine it would have been very bad," I said.

"It would have broken Adela's heart."

"Then I suppose Bayard put that letter in my bag?"

"I suppose so." She looked at me with wide eyes. "We wouldn't give him what he wanted. I couldn't. I have no money of my own. Allen wouldn't. He said Bayard had been bleeding this family for

years. He told me not to worry. That he'd find a way out of it. That he wasn't afraid of Bayard. But—it's been terrible. Miss Keate. Bayard goaded us. Hinted at things. I was always conscious of it. He wouldn't let me forget for a moment. He—it's horrible to say it but—"

her voice sank to a whisper—"I'm glad he's dead. I am. I'm glad he's dead."

So that was why Allen had searched the dead man's pockets so feverishly. But did Janice realize what she was telling me? That she and Allen both had the strongest of motives for wishing Bayard Thatcher out of the way? But Allen had an alibi; he had been with Dave the entire afternoon.

"Yes," she said thoughtfully. "I suppose Bayard hid the letter in your bag. He'd have thought there was no danger of its being found. He knew, of course, that Allen and I would do our utmost to recover it. He must have been afraid Allen would search his things while he was ill."

"My dear," I said gently. "Why did Dave shoot Bayard?"

She shrank back against the window.

"Shoot Bayard! Then you knew?"

"Yes. And that the bullet wounded Bayard's shoulder and that Adela heard and got there in time to keep Dave from shooting again."

The color came slowly back to her lips.

"I don't know," she said sobbily. "I'm not sure. But it had nothing to do with my letter; I'm sure of that. Dave would have told me; confronted me with it. Dave's been terribly depressed since Bayard's death—and before that. He isn't like himself at all since he's been sick so much."

"Janice." It was Evelyn from the doorway. "Oh, there you are. Emmeline has made some coffee for us. You'd better come down and drink some and then try to rest. We've got so much to do today. Miss Keate, I'll send some coffee up here to you."

"No," I said hurriedly. "Let me have a glass of warm milk. I don't want coffee." I shuddered as I glanced at Florrie's pale face on the pillow—her loose mouth.

"Of course," said Evelyn, blissfully matter-of-fact. "Come, Janice. You look dreadfully tired."

At the door Janice hesitated, and as Evelyn preceded her into the passage she came back, paused beside me, and said, "Thank you," in a low voice and was gone. I knew she was not thanking me for concealing the matter of the letter.

But the sound of their light footsteps had not more than died away before I was in a very turmoil of conflicting emotions and desires again. Why had I not asked her about all those things which gave such hideous witness against her? Why had I not at least asked her about the bloodstained hat?

Florrie moved, and I went to take her pulse. Feeling for the throb, I thought impatiently that after all I could have done no more than I did. It is extraordinarily difficult—indeed, it is quite impossible to approach a lovely young woman and say to her, "My dear young lady, this is all very well, but did you murder the man?"

No, I couldn't have done that. But I felt rather sick as I thought of the accumulating evidence against her.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Magazine Covers Used For Jig-Saw Puzzles

Michiagn City, Ind. — (UP) — Magazine covers are being used for jig-saw puzzles by inmates of the Indiana hospital for the criminal insane at the state prison here.

"They cut them up and then put them together for their own amusement," according to Warden Walter H. Daly. "It took me two hours to work one of them."

are large deposits of cinnabar, the ore from which mercury is obtained. Sutton believes the deposits are worth a fortune.

A firm of El Paso realtors, owners of the land upon which the prospector said he made his strike, will assay the ore and develop the property if inspection warrants.

A plant native to only one volcano, the Haleakala Silversword, grows in the crater of dormant Haleakala, in the Hawaii national park.

PARIS SEES OLD GERMAN FLAG

Paris — (UP) — The imperial flag is flying over the German embassy here for the first time in 19 years. It brings reminders to thousands.

The black, white and red stripes last fluttered over the French capitol on August 3, 1914. When the sun set behind the heights of Mont Valerin, from which point in 1871 the Germans poured shells into Paris, the emblem was pulled down.

A tense little group of diplomatic officials, gathered on the roof-top, knew it would not be raised the next morning, for the German ultimatum expired at midnight, and Ambassador de Schoen was ready to depart for Berlin. But he and other officials returning to the Fatherland were confident it would be hoisted in a few months, when Paris would fall.

The "few months" have stretched to 19 years. The present ambassador has ordered the old flag of the Hohenzollerns raised over the Embassy, coincident with the inauguration at Potsdam of the "Third Reich" of Adolf Hitler.

The imperial emblem was raised over the Embassy purposely without ceremony, a circumspet decision, since its appearance is not calculated to arouse happy memories among the French.

The structure over which the imperial flag flies is an extensive palace, containing both the embassy and consulate, no distant from the French Foreign Office.

Modern Mona Lisa



This enigmatic smile of lovely Maxine Walker, student at the Art Institute, Chicago, recently won her the honor of being chosen as the modern prototype of the celebrated Mona Lisa of Leonardo da Vinci. Her features are to be immortalized on canvas by David Leavitt, noted artist, whose murals bedeck the walls of the Administration Building at the Century of Progress Exposition.

Horse Thieves Were Given Jail Sentences

Springfield, Mo. — (UP) — The old days of horse thievery have returned to the Ozark region. The retribution of a "hoss thief" in bygone years was hanging, but now justice gives jail sentences.

Two young boys rode to a dance at a farm, tying their saddled steeds outside. On returning the boys found their mares had vanished.

A search resulted and three men were arrested and charged with grand larceny.

Pawnbroker Took Plane as Loan Security

Kansas City, Mo. — (UP) — Ben Hurst, local pawnbroker, always has boasted that he would loan money on anything of tangible value.

So a recent letter from Williard Herman of Oregon, Mo., worried him considerably. Herman wanted to borrow \$250 on an airplane.

For a time Hurst was stumped. He didn't know where to put the security for the loan. But the old-time boast had to be made good, so he decided to rent a hangar, and advised Herman they might make a deal.

Mendicant Forgot to Use Crutches, in Rage

Marysville, Kan. — (UP) — A mendicant attempting to make sales of shoestrings and pencils at a cafe here became enraged and stampeded from the scene, leaving his crutches behind.

Later the mendicant miraculously recovered his limp, slipped back into the cafe, grabbed the crutches and departed hurriedly. He has not been seen here since.

Laborer Was Angry at Order to Support Wife

Merced, Cal. — (UP) — Candelario Torro, 24-year-old Mexican laborer, had a grievance today.

An unsympathetic superior court judge ordered him to support his wife, Helen, instead of leaving her at his mother's home, to be supported with her eight children on \$70 monthly given her by the county.

The judge told Torro not to spend all his money on clothes for himself.

OLD MEN OF THE EAST

A man who must be well in the running for the title of the world's oldest inhabitant has been discovered in Nagpur City, in the central provinces, during the recent Indian census.

His name is Siddi Wastad, and he is believed locally to be over one hundred and fifty years old. The census superintendent puts his age, more moderately, at about one hundred and thirty.

The East seems to produce some remarkable cases of longevity. One that most people will remember is that of Zoro Agha, the Turk, who started on his travels when over the century and a half. Siddi Wastad is not so active, but he enjoyed perfect health until the influenza epidemic of 1918.—London Answers.

To keep clean and healthy take Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets. They regulate liver, bowels and stomach.—Adv.

Well, Why Should She? A girl never knows how to do anything that a nice young man is willing to teach her.—Exchange.



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Sioux City Ptg. Co. No. 20-33

Cannibalistic Frogs Worry Fish Commission

Harrisburg — (UP) — The cannibalistic habits of frogs in its care are worrying the Pennsylvania Fish commission.

Take the frogs at the Reynoldsville hatchery, who will, according to the commission, "eat anything moving not too large to swallow."

One big frog recently gulped down a fair sized snapping turtle, which accidentally got into

Officials Expect Normal Fruit Crop This Season

Bakersfield, Cal. — (UP) — County agricultural authorities expect the fruit crops for Kern county to be normal this season.

"One fruit season will be a little later this year, as the bloom on most of the deciduous fruits

Mercury Bearing Ore Found Near El Paso

El Paso, Tex. — (UP) — Jim Sutton, El Paso prospector, returned here from Mt. Franklin, nearby, with samples from what he says

was from 10 days to two weeks later than last year." Buford Fox, of the county agricultural commissioner's office workers, announced following a survey recently completed.

A slight increase in the melon crop is anticipated.