

MURDER By An ARISTOCRAT

Mignon G. Eberhart

"I'm all right," said Florrie rather weakly. "Miss Evelyn told me all about what happened. I don't suppose anybody meant to give me the wrong stuff." She glanced at me rather doubtfully but continued: "Miss Evelyn said I owed my life to the nurse. I suppose I do. But I ought to have known not to take the pills. A red-haired woman and the moon at its full and something out of a—"

Adela thought she was still only half-conscious. She bent over the bed.

"There now, Florrie. Try to get some rest and natural sleep. Dr. Bouigny says you are going to be all right. Isn't it fine that Miss Keate was here and knew just what to do for you?"

Florrie looked at me again; it was a curious look in which suspicion and gratitude were oddly blended.

"Oh, yes," she said. "But I ought to have known better than to take them. But I guess she didn't mean to do it."

"Why, of course she didn't mean to do it. It was a very terrible accident, but you are going to be all right now. Miss Keate will stay here and take care of you and—"

"I think I'd be better off alone, ma'am, if you don't mind."

"Alone! Oh, no, Florrie, Dr. Bouigny says it's best for Miss Keate to stay with you, and I think she's very kind to do it."

"Yes," muttered Florrie. "But there's a full moon tonight."

Adela looked perplexed.

"Florrie, you aren't yourself yet. But don't worry: You'll be all right if you do just as the doctor says. Will you be comfortable, Miss Keate? Is there anything you need? I can't tell you how grateful we are to you. If you hadn't been here last night—"

"Her face was hard all at once, touched with granite. She went on: "Don't hesitate to ask Emmeline to help you or get anything you want. Good night."

Her silk skirts swished delicately on the stairs. Florrie sighed.

"I don't think you really meant to give me those tablets, Miss Keate," she said forgivingly. "You've been awful good to me today. I guess you didn't mean to. Miss Evelyn said I'd have died sure if you hadn't known what to do for me."

I could see no good purpose in telling Florrie anything of the mystery of the veronal tablets. I said:

"That's good. Now I'll just fluff up your pillows, and you try to sleep."

"Say, Miss Keate, did they have the funeral today?"

"Yes."

"Was it a big one?"

"I don't know; there were lots of flowers."

"There would be. Likely the whole town was here. Say, Miss Keate, have they caught the burglar yet?"

"No."

She brooded on that for some time. Then she said with a slow sort of smile:

"They won't catch him, either. Those diamonds—"

she laughed outright—"those diamonds. Say, Miss Keate, nobody stole those diamonds. I know exactly where they are."

CHAPTER XII

After a moment I realized that I had known it all along; had known there was something faulty, something too pat, about the missing diamonds; had known there was something conspiratorial about that supposed theft of which so much had been made. But with my own eyes I had seen Adela open that safe and discover the loss of the jewels. Who, then, had ar-

ranged their disappearance at so apt a moment?

"Where? How do you know? Why didn't you tell?"

It was difficult to persuade Florrie to talk.

"The only way to be safe in this house is to mind your own business," she said.

It was only when I combined a delicate threat to tell Miss Thatcher with a sort of provisional promise to keep what she had told me a secret unless I found it absolutely necessary to tell it that she resumed her communicative mood.

The diamonds, she said, were in the tall jar of green bath salts in the bathroom adjoining Janice's bedroom. She had seen them there the morning following Bayard's murder. She had been cleaning the room rather hurriedly, and had picked up the jar to wipe the shelf under it and had caught the glimmer of one of the jewels which had somehow slipped through the concealing layers of crystals and next the glass. She had explored then and there, and while she didn't remember exactly the entire collection of diamonds, she thought they were all there. Or most of them.

"It was a good place to hide them," she said ruminatively. "The bath salts are sort of shiny; it was just the light catching one of the diamonds that made me look. But I didn't say anything to anybody. I wanted to keep out of it. And I knew they were safe there because Miss Janice hates bath salts and never uses them. She says she just keeps the jar there for the color scheme. Did you ever see her bathroom, Miss Keate? She's got water lilies painted all around the walls. And little green frogs. Heathenish, I say."

"Are they still there?"

"Oh, sure. They're painted."

"The diamonds, I mean."

She looked evasive.

"The last time I looked they were," she said. "Say, Nurse, do you suppose Miss Janice managed so I got those tablets—veronal? is that what you call them?"

"I don't know how it happened, Florrie. Why did you think she might have—managed it?"

"She don't like me," said Florrie, still evasive. "She threatened me just yesterday."

"Threatened you?"

"Well, she said I'd regret something I did. And I got those tablets right afterward and nearly died."

I suppressed a smile at the thought of the salutary effect of Janice's rebuke. Whatever Florrie's conclusion regarding the veronal tablets came to be, I thought it highly unlikely she would ever do any more prowling among Janice's things. Then another thought struck me:

"Florrie, think now and answer carefully. Did you leave that box of tablets anywhere in the house before you took them? Did you put it down on a table? Or anywhere? Was the box out of your possession even for a moment?"

"No," said Florrie at once. "I'm sure of that, Miss Keate. I took the box from you and came straight up here to my room and took the first two tablets before I even undressed. Then my head was no better, so I kept on taking them."

"How many did you take altogether?" I asked, and when she told me I shuddered.

"But didn't you see they were not aspirin? They are much larger, for one thing."

"Why, no," she said. "Coming from a hospital, I expected them to be a little different from regular aspirin. Hospital tablets are such queer places. Do

you know what people are saying about who killed Bayard?"

"No. You'd better go to sleep, Florrie."

"I don't know either. But they'll say Hilary killed him. You see if I'm not right. Hilary and Bayard never liked each other."

"Florrie, do you know anything about a Nita Thatcher? Have you ever heard any of the family mention Nita's grave?"

"No," she said after a thoughtful moment. "There's a grave up at the Thatcher cemetery marked Nita Thatcher, but I never heard anything about it. The Thatchers are funny about that cemetery," she went on, pondering. "Dave is always going up there. And Miss Adela. And even Bayard used to go up there once in awhile."

"Was she—Nita—any connection to Bayard?"

Florrie wrinkled her colorless eyebrows.

"I don't know, Miss Keate, but I don't think so. I never heard anything at all about her. And if there'd been anything," added Florrie not at all enigmatically, "I'd have known it."

I very nearly said, "You and everybody in C—"

For three whole days I nursed Florrie. They were to all outward aspects quiet days, chiefly characterized by a determined and outwardly successful effort on the part of the Thatchers to ignore the matter of Bayard's dreadful death and to present an unruffled countenance to the world. The only visible evidences that things were not as they appeared lay in the fact that Hilary and Evelyn stayed on, instead of returning to their own household, and that instead of getting a new housemaid during Florrie's illness, Janice and Evelyn between them took over her duties. This was, I had no doubt, to prevent letting a girl from town into the house and its intimate workings, a girl who would talk, would relate every scrap of gossip she could garner to all too willing ears. I knew that, so far, they had managed to keep Florrie's illness a secret, although once Adela went to see Florrie's mother, and I suppose she told her of it. I never knew what measures she took to insure the woman's silence.

Almost frantically they resumed that orderly daily routine and clung to it as a man may cling to a straw to save himself from drowning. During those days I saw them together mostly at meals when they were bland, gracious, preoccupied with the housekeeping and gardens and affairs of the town. At the same time I could hardly help knowing in a general way what went on in the house. Once I ventured into Bayard's room and found it prim and orderly with drawn shades and Bayard's possessions—for I looked to make sure—removed and I suppose packed away. I wondered fleetingly what had become of the gin.

Bayard was never mentioned. Every so often Strove would come to the house and talk apologetically of the diamonds and the burglar, and I wonder anew just where my duty lay concerning those diamonds—and more urgent concerning my accumulating evidence that Bayard Thatcher had been murdered not by a marauding burglar but by one of his own family. If the county authorities chose to ignore it, as they did, to whom ought I to appeal? Or ought I to appeal at all? I think I had some faint notion that if any stranger actually was made a victim of, and the thing came to his arrest, I should step forward with what I knew. But in my heart I felt, I am sure, that it would not come to that. That things would somehow work out. For a feeling of something impending was everywhere: In the air we breathed and the food we ate and in

our eyes meeting and glancing quickly away.

A climax was coming. We all knew it. It was in Janice's set white face as she went about the cool, polished spaces of the house doing Florrie's dusting, or working in her garden and later appearing fresh and beautiful at the dinner table, ready to take her role in that tragedy-comedy of manners that went on every night—avoiding me and avoiding Allen, her dark eyes somber above quiet lips.

It was in Adela's bleak eyes and her blunt white fingers as they worked ceaselessly with her long turquoise beads or with the flat silver beside her plate, and in her bland observations which saved us so frequently from a conversational trap and which yet were apt to break off in the middle as if she'd completely forgotten what she had been saying.

Even Emmeline grew nervous; she twisted her fingers constantly and took to having neuralgia and waiting a smell of vehement wintergreen salve which did not add to our combined peace of mind.

Allen Carick looked taut and spent, as if he'd been sleeping badly. And Evelyn decided to have the boys kept on at camp for a while after the summer session was over.

"It's as well not to let them come home just now," she said, and later I heard her sending a carefully worded telegram over the telephone to the head of the school.

I grew restless under that prevailing sense of strain and expectation, under the goading pressure of my many unanswered questions and unproved theories, and—more definitely—that unrelenting chaperonage. Every one of those three days I left the house for a time, and never, after Sunday, alone. Evelyn volunteered once to go for a walk with me, and I could scarcely refuse. Another time Hilary turned up about four with the sedan and took Adela and me for a long and silent country ride—reluctantly, I think, and with a very red neck, which was all I could see of him from the tonneau. And another time, by leaving from the back door, I got away from the house unobserved, only to meet Allen a quarter of a mile away, rather breathless, as if he'd run across country. He stuck to me like a burr, but was lost in his own not too pleasant thoughts, for he tramped along steadily with his hands in his pockets and his blue eyes frowning at the path, and only spoke twice during the whole walk, which I somewhat unkindly prolonged, taking him through some thickets where there were opening milkweed pods whose soft silks clung stubbornly to his trousers and resisted his savage efforts to brush them off. He swore a little under his breath and brushed and brushed with his hands and looked up at me and surprisingly laughed. He was very nice when he laughed: His sullen frown gave place to a sort of bright blue twinkle, and he had a direct and very charming way of smiling exactly into your eyes.

"You win, Nurse," he said, admitting his espionage almost in words. But he stayed with me until he saw me safe and incommunicado, so to speak, inside the door of the Thatcher house.

The whole thing was an admission, I suppose, that something was to come. That there must be some change, some development, some climax of those hidden forces. But I think none of us guessed the dreadful turn that development was to take.

My nerves were on edge, and I slept poorly at night. There were times when I suspected every member of that family of having murdered Bayard.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

OF INTEREST TO FARMERS

EMERGENCY HAY CROPS

Field peas and grain provide a good quality hay in the cooler sections. Care must be exercised to secure good, viable seed as difficulty has been experienced with this recently. The usual planting rate is 1½ bushels each of peas and medium maturing oats. On light soils the Scotch pea may prove out better than the common Canadian. An improved variety of the common yellow pea, known as the Multiplier, is popular on the heavier soils. The mixture can be harvested when the oats are in the milk stage or not later than when the lower part of the plant shows signs of ripening. Oats, barley, or wheat will make fair yields of good hay when at early blossom or milk stage. Cutting the grain nurse crop for hay not only will supply some roughage that may be quite as valuable as the threshed grain, but it also insures a better stand of alfalfa or clover. In addition, a fair crop of legume hay may be secured in favorable seasons. Ten to 15 lbs. of scarified sweet clover may be seeded alone in early spring and a fair hay crop secured in late summer. Also medium red clover or a mixture of 6 lbs. timothy, 4 lbs. medium red clover and 2 lbs. alsike may be seeded in like manner. hen sown without a nurse crop and in a favorable season, a ton or more of legume hay will be secured in late summer, with a field that should go through the winter in good shape. Some farmers use a nurse crop, cut it for hay, and state they also have a good crop of the legume hay the same year. Winter vetch, also known as sand and hairy vetch, is best when seeded with grain as it has a reclining habit and it cannot be relied upon to give a sure crop in the cooler climates. Combinations of 1½ to 2 bushels of oats or of 1¼ bushels of wheat or rye with 25 to 30 lbs. of vetch are suggested. Fall rye and vetch, seeded not later than late August or early September, is advised as a light soil crop. Timothy meadows and thin alfalfa or clover will produce better yields if given a top-dressing of manure during the winter or early spring. Nitrate fertilizer is now comparatively low in cost and its use will not only increase the tonnage of timothy, but will also add materially to its protein content. Some even contend that it is possible to secure protein from nitrogen fertilized timothy quite as cheaply as from clover and alfalfa. For instance, a trial in a certain locality was recently conducted in which 250 lbs. of nitrogen fertilizer were applied per acre to a portion of a timothy field. The hay from the treated portion of the field contained 194 lbs. more protein per acre than the hay from the untreated portion. After harvesting the first crop of hay, the field may be plowed and planted to sudan, millet, or corn for additional roughage. Cowpeas are an important emergency hay in the South. They should be seeded much the same as soybeans. If sown alone on clean land it may be broadcast at the rate of one to two bushels per acre. If sown in 3-foot drills, 20 lbs. of seed will be sufficient. Seeding should be delayed until ground is warm, say a week or two after corn planting. They are normally cut for hay when the first pods ripen and because of the succulent stems care must be exercised in curing. They may be handled in small cocks such as are soybeans, or large cocks with a sort of tripod shock supporter may be used to hasten drying. Sudan grass is best adapted to grazing, but will make a good yield of palatable hay if cut early before the heads get too mature. It is relatively low in protein and therefore is properly to be considered as a secondary choice to some earlier planted legume. In favorable seasons it will yield a fair crop of hay if planted in June after taking off an early hay or pea crop. In any event, it should not be seeded until one or two weeks after corn planting time as it is very sensitive to cool soils and cool weather. Two cuttings a year are secured in favorable seasons. Sudan should be seeded at the rate of 25 to 35 lbs. per acre as the seed is often of not too good germination. The seed bed should be well prepared, with lumps broken up and the soil well compacted. If soil and weather are good, the seed may be broadcast and harrowed in. Otherwise, drill in from one-half to one inch deep to insure a catch if the soil surface is dry. Corn planted as late as July will provide good fodder if properly handled, although June planting would be preferable. It should be sown in drills 42 inches apart, using 25 to 30 lbs. seed per acre. It makes little difference what variety of corn is used so long as the stalks are only two to three feet apart in the row. This gives a leafy forage with few ears that gives excellent satisfaction in feeding. After planting, the land can be harrowed once or twice and will need little cultivation after it gets two feet high. It should be cut when the small ears, on the outer rows begin to glaze and the lower leaves begin to turn yellow and dry. Bind into fair sized

bundle and put in fair sized shocks bound tightly at the top. The one disadvantage is that it is not practical to stack it or store it in the barn because it contains so much moisture. In feeding value this corn fodder is nearly equal to timothy hay, but because of its succulence it is better adapted to dairy cows. It provides a leafy forage that a learned professor years ago demonstrated had quite as high or higher feeding value per acre as corn grown in the usual manner. The nutrients usually deposited in the ear are largely retained in the stalk. It is a satisfactory and palatable feed for cows, horses, cattle, and sheep.

THE CORN CROP

There are three important factors to consider in connection with the planting of corn. First, the preparation of the seed-bed; second, selection of the seed ears and testing them for germination, and third the adjustment of the planter to insure its dropping the right number of kernels to the hill. It is just as important to look after these details this year as it was when corn was bringing a higher price. It is true that we ought to grow less corn in 1933 than we did last year. However, this should not be accomplished by planting the usual acreage in a half-hearted sort of way, but rather by growing fewer acres under the most favorable conditions possible. It is much more sensible to exert every effort to obtain a maximum yield on a smaller acreage than to plant seed of unknown germination on a poorly prepared seed-bed, in the hope of not getting a full crop. Let us put forth the usual effort to get a high yield, but so far as possible let us substitute a legume crop on a portion of the acreage planted to corn in former years. A well prepared seed-bed is the first essential to a good yield of any crop, and corn is no exception to this general rule. Fall plowed land should be disked as early as the ground can be worked. This tends to warm up the soil and to encourage the rapid sprouting of weed seeds. The aim should then be to kill as many weeds as possible before planting, by means of disking and harrowing. When the ground is to be plowed in the spring, it is good practice to disk before plowing, to aid in the conservation of soil moisture. After plowing, a well tilled seed-bed should be prepared with disk and harrow. Assuming that the seed ears were carefully selected in the field in the fall, and were well dried before frost came, a test for germination is all that need be given in the spring. Light ears and ears with discolored butts should be discarded. The rag-doll method is commonly used for germination tests. Take from six to eight kernels from each ear and place them on a muslin cloth, laid on top of a piece of butcher's paper. Mark the cloth off into spaces and number the latter corresponding to the ears to be tested. A cloth 12 inches wide by 52 inches long will provide space enough for eight kernels from each of 30 ears. When kernels from 30 ears have been placed on the cloth, roll paper and cloth into a roll, or a ragdoll, as it is called. Place these "dolls" in lukewarm water for about two hours, then drain, and set them on end in a pail lined with burlap. Place the dolls in a warm room for seven to ten days, sprinkling the "dolls" from day to day with warm water, so as to keep them moist. When the kernels have sprouted and the sprouts are from two to four inches long, unroll the "doll" and note the character of the sprouts from each kernel. Discard all seed ears that show one or two kernels with weak sprouts. Kernels showing weak sprouts are as unsuitable for seed as those that do not sprout at all. Rigid selection should be adhered to, because kernels that show weak sprouts in the rag-doll test, where ideal conditions for sprouting are maintained, are likely not to germinate at all out in the field, where less favorable conditions may prevail. When seed corn is infected with spores of the dry rot fungi, molds will be noticed on the sprouts as revealed by the rag-doll test. This test may also be used to eliminate seed ears infected with dry rot fungi. However, a better way to eliminate these diseases consists in treating the seed with one of the well known mercury dusts. Mix one bushel of corn with two ounces of the fungicide in a barrel churn, revolved slowly so as to insure covering every kernel with the dust. Average untreated seed corn usually produces from five to eight bushels less corn per acre than treated seed. It is a good plan to make sure that the corn planter will steadily drop the same number of kernels per hill, so as to insure an even stand. Don't use an old planter that can not be depended upon to do a good job in the field. Uneven planting may cause a considerable reduction in yield, and should not be tolerated.

PROVED TOO LATE

Too many good dairy bulls go to the butcher; too many poor ones stay on farms.

QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

An efficient dairy ration must not only be ample in amount, but must also contain sufficient protein to balance the carbohydrates and fat, because production is lifted to the amount of milk provided for by the protein, no matter how plentiful the carbohydrates may be. These nutrient requirements have been determined by many well known feeding trials and experiments. A dairy cow capable of high production could eat all the grass, hay, and corn silage she could hold, with a liberal amount of ground corn, barley, and oats, and still not be

able to utilize her full capacity to turn feed into milk, because she would not have enough protein to balance the carbohydrates in her ration. Therefore, no matter how liberal the quantity of her feed or how rich it is in carbohydrates and fat, if it is lacking in this essential factor, protein, her production and profit are limited just as surely as if the rest of the feed were cut off down to the level of the low protein.

HAVE GOOD EQUIPMENT

Efficient farm layouts mean more labor income.

Fine Beetles Killed

Many Trees, Experts Say

Missoula, Mont. — (UP) — Pine beetles have killed millions of trees in the Beaverhead and Bitter Root national forests lately, forestry experts report.

Billions of feet of lodgepole pine and yellow pine are endangered by the insects, which bore through the bark of the trees and thus kill them.

Montana forestry experts were considering a wide-spread cam-

paign against the beetles, adopting methods used in Oregon to kill the insects. By cutting down the tree, and subjecting it to a slight electric current the beetles may be killed rapidly and at a small cost, it was said.

Bicyclist in Knee

Pants Ordered Away

El Paso, Tex. — (UP) — Little Lord Fauntleroy pants may be quite chic for gentlemen of Europe, but bare knees exposed by Eris Malpas, 34, Australian

cyclist on a world tour, brought an order from a police captain here to be on his way and not be seen on the streets.

The officer feared for the safety of the youth in the West Texas country that is just becoming accustomed to men in knickers.

Malpas went on his way riding his 33-year-old bicycle.

Barter and Trade

Business Reached Peak

Minden, Nev. — (UP) — Barter and trade reached its peak here when

L. Falette traded a truck load of onions for a similar amount of California oranges.

Local markets are glutted with onions with slow sale, while oranges are in demand at \$1.50 per box. On the other hand Nevada onions are in demand at Los Angeles markets.

One After Eating

From The Humorist

Tramp: The lady next door gave me a piece of 'ome-made cake. Won't you give me something, too? Lady (spitefully): Yes, I'd better give you a digestive tablet.