

# MURDER By An ARISTOCRAT

Mignon G. Eberhart

That day, which was Thursday, July 7, I spent in his room or out on the small balcony. He slept most of the day, and I watched the various comings and goings of the household and thought of his incredible suggestion—statement, in fact—that someone in the family had tried to murder him. I decided against it. It was true that the accident had certain peculiar aspects, but none of them was exactly convincing. It occurred to me, too, that it was a little odd that Hilary had not asked a single question about the accident; he had not asked how it happened, or when it happened, or with what revolver, or didn't Bayard know it was loaded, or made any of the obvious comments. But Miss Adela had already told him of the affair, and, at any rate, it was a trivial matter.

The small balcony overlooked the rose gardens and part of the lawn and as I lounged in the large steamer chair with which it was equipped I caught various glimpses of the household. A trellis ran up to the balcony, and the vines were laden with roses, and the whole place was almost unbearably fragrant. To this day when I smell sun-warmed roses I think of the Thatcher case—which is, when I come to think of it, a rather strange anomaly.

Janice, slim and very lovely in pale green dimity with the sunlight on her warm dark hair, worked in the garden for some time, digging around the tall gladioluses, which were beginning to bloom, with competent, ungloved hands and directing, with a certain cool efficiency which I liked, a man who appeared to be a sort of gardener and handy-man and whose name I later found was Higby. Once Adela, followed by an old and too well fed bird dog, joined her and the two talked for some time in what I thought was a rather agitated manner.

And once during the morning the yellow roadster again sped up the drive. There were two occupants this time, a woman whom I surmised to be the Evelyn I had heard mentioned, Hilary's wife, and a young man. They too talked to Janice for some time, and I had an opportunity to observe them lengthily, if not very closely. Evelyn was a tall, remarkably handsome woman of around 40, with smooth gold hair done in a simple knot on her neck, a brown face, a fine profile, and eyes that I found later were very dark blue. She too had a look of race; the well poised simplicity of manner, innately dignified yet simple and gracious and direct, which characterized the other Thatcher women. I found myself employing that ill-used and outdated aristocrat again; it was the only word to describe the Thatchers.

The young man who accompanied her and who lingered to talk to Janice when Evelyn Thatcher went into the house, bore such a striking resemblance to Evelyn that I thought at first he might be her son. As I looked closer, however, I saw that he was too old for that, and came to what was also a correct conclusion, that he was her brother. Later I knew his name was Allen—Allen Carick—and that he was on a visit in the Hilary Thatcher household up on the hill. If I had guessed what an important part he was to play in the strange and terrible drama that was even then, unknown to me, unfolding, I would have paid more attention to him. As it was I only noted him casually, although it did strike me that once when Janice

scratched her hand on a thorn of the roses she was then cutting, he caught her hand and examined the scratch with rather more anxiety than the occasion demanded. And I was quite sure a bit of color came into Janice's face, though it may have been due only to the heat of the sun.

Dave Thatcher—who, of course, was Janice's husband and younger brother to Adela and Hilary—did not appear at either lunch or dinner. At lunch I heard Emmeline tell Miss Adela that he had gone to the cemetery, which somehow increased the little mystery that was beginning to surround him. Especially when something Janice said told me that the cemetery referred to was the family burial plot and only a quarter of a mile or so from the house. Not exactly an all-day pilgrimage.

And I must not forget Emmeline, who brought fresh linen to my patient's room about noon. She was a dark, tall, unbelievably spare woman with iron-gray hair combed tightly back with old-fashioned side combs and a way of watching your mouth instead of your eyes which was quite comprehensible in view of her deafness but was not exactly nice. Not nice either was a curious way she had of twisting and working her hands, rasping her fingers eagerly and constantly against her palms, while otherwise standing rigidly still.

She asked Bayard how he felt in the oddly harsh and infectionless voice of the very deaf, nodded briefly as he shouted "Better," gave me an extremely sharp look, and left, looking from the back rather like a remarkably tall black clothespin with a cap on its head.

It was altogether, so far as I knew, a drowsy, pleasant day. The doctor paid us a brief visit shortly after lunch; Bayard had got over his garrulous spell and lapsed into a taciturn silence, and I napped in the steamer chair on the balcony most of the lazy, warm afternoon.

Hilary came in for a moment after dinner, but made my patient only the briefest call; it began to rain about 9:30 and at 10 I prepared my patient for the night and, at his curt request, locked the door to the hall and settled myself again on the chaise longue. I felt decidedly resentful about that: He didn't need night care at all, and I had anticipated an undisturbed rest in the cool bedroom next door.

But after more years of nursing than I care to acknowledge I have grown accustomed to the whims of my patients. I made myself as comfortable as might be among the chintz-covered pillows. I had turned out all the lights in the bedroom and the adjoining bathroom, my patient appeared to be sound asleep, and the house, quiet all day, had sunk into a heavier, more poignant silence. Almost, I thought drowsily to myself, as if it were holding its breath.

The balcony window was open, and I could hear the soft sound of the falling rain, and the sweet fragrance of roses filled the room. Through the misty darkness I could see the outline of the window, a long, faintly lighter rectangle. From some water spout rain dripped with soothing, dully beating monotony. An ideal night for sleep.

But I couldn't sleep. I turned and twisted. I took off my cap, and the hairpins out of my hair, but the cushion under my head was just as hard. I was too cool and fumbled for and drew over my feet a soft eiderdown. I was too warm and tossed it

off again. I was thirsty and tiptoed to the bathroom, turning on the faucet with care so as not to wake my patient, but the drink did not satisfy me. I tried counting sheep, I tried making my vision a blank. I tried thinking of the virtues of my family, as someone advised me to do as a cure for insomnia. The latter expedient was almost my undoing. My accumulating rage reached a small climax with the thought of my cousin's gift to me last Christmas—six pairs of gray woolen bed socks, knitted and inexpressibly spinsterish—and I found myself farther from sleep than ever. I became calmer, however, thinking of some of the more entertaining surgical operations at which I had assisted, and was pleasantly drifting off to sleep at last when a clock somewhere downstairs struck 12 in a deep muffled boom and roused me, and I stared at the window again and listened to the rain.

It was some time after that that I became gradually aware that the balcony window was no longer a perfect rectangle, faintly lighter than the room. I had not heard a sound, but there was certainly a blacker shadow in it.

I was sitting upright, leaning forward, straining my eyes and ears. It seemed to me the shadow moved and that I heard a faint sound. Someone was outside on the balcony, cautiously attempting to enter the room.

All Bayard's hints and outright statements swept with a rush back into my consciousness. Who was out there? Why was he trying to enter the room in so furtive a fashion?

My heart was pounding so furiously that I felt sure the thing at the window must hear it. The door to the hall was much farther from me than the window and was locked. If I screamed, would I succeed in rousing the sleeping house before I myself could be silenced? Was I to sit there as if frozen and let my patient be murdered? Was I—

There was another faint sound from the window, and then a pause, as if the intruder were listening again, to be sure no one had discovered his presence. Through the breathless silence came the soft beating of the rain and the overpowering sweet scent of the rain-wet roses.

It was then that I knocked the lamp off the table.

I did not do it purposely. I was trying to get to my feet, fumbling blindly for support with my eyes fixed on the shadow at the window. The lamp went over with a dull crash on the thick rug and the bulb in it smashed and there was a sort of scrambling noise on the balcony. The shadow was gone.

"What's that? Nurse! Miss Keate! What's the matter?" It was my patient, of course.

"Nothing," I said shakily. "Nothing."

"What was that noise?" His voice grew sharper as he grew wide awake. "Turn on the light. What was that noise?"

My trained instinct for protecting my patient's rest asserted itself.

"Nothing," I said more quietly. "I put out my hand and accidentally knocked the lamp off the table. The bulb in it broke. That's all."

"Oh," he said, and after a thoughtful moment repeated in a less doubtful way, "Oh."

And after all, how could I be certain it was anything else? It could so easily be some deceiving play of lights and shadows on the rain-drenched balcony. And windows have been known to creak before now.

It was then, however, that I made a mistake. Instead of going to the window, watching and listening for any sign of a retreating figure, I went to the bathroom, turned on a small light, and left the door into the bedroom ajar. My patient, drowsy with the opiate Dr. Bouigny had or-

dered for the night, had gone back to sleep at once, so the light did not disturb him, and I felt infinitely safer and more normal. I am not as a rule afraid of the night.

But it is not surprising that I still did not sleep, and I think it was around 2 o'clock that a second attempt was made to enter Bayard Thatcher's room. It came this time from inside the house, and I was first aware of it when I heard some faint sound of motion in the hall and then the barest click of the latch. The door was, of course, still locked, and I cannot describe my feelings when I sat there in the soft light watching that polished doorknob turn and twist. Finally I walked quietly to the door and bent my head to listen, and I'm sure I heard a kind of panting sound—like a dog on a hot day.

This time the desperate courage of extreme terror moved me. I clutched for the key and turned it in the lock, although I don't know what I intended to do. But my fingers shook and were clumsy, and the key stuck, and it was a long 10 seconds before I managed to get the door open.

There was nothing there.

A dim night light burned in the empty hall. Its rows of closed doors and the shining stairs descending into blackness told me nothing. Or—no! Had not my eyes caught some motion there along the opposite wall? But there was nothing—Ah, the mirror!

It hung at an angle opposite me so that it reflected to my point of vision the wall and doors on a line with my own door but toward the front of the house. And one of those doors was moving. Moving slowly and stealthily, but moving.

There was no light in the room beyond. But I was sure that in the narrowing black aperture there was a face, a pair of eyes. Someone watching me, witnessing my terror—some pair of eyes I could not see actually meeting mine in the mirror.

It was an extraordinarily terrifying moment. But the door closed finally, and remained closed, while I stood as if rooted to the spot. I have always felt it a distinct credit to my nerves that I retained the presence of mind to step into the hall, count, and find it was the second door from the windows.

Probably I would not have had that presence of mind if I had known that while my eyes had been riveted on the reflection of that closing door I was under observation from an entirely unsuspected quarter. Only when I turned from counting the doors did I discover that a man had come silently from somewhere—up the stairs, I supposed—and stood on the landing of the stairs watching me with languid, half-closed eyes.

I very nearly screamed. I would have screamed had not my throat been suddenly paralyzed. For a moment that seemed at least 10 we stood there, I with my hand on the door of my patient's room, ready to flee inside, and he clinging to the railing of the stairs.

He was a young man, around 30, with more than a faint resemblance to Bayard Thatcher about his nose and forehead; his chin, however, was undecided, his mouth pale and a little loose, and his eyes heavy lidded and languid. Gradually my fear subsided. This must be the mysterious Dave Thatcher of whom they had spoken—Janice's husband.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Not So Sure.  
From The Wheel.  
Lawyer: Are you positive that the prisoner is the man who stole your car?  
Witness: I was until you cross-examined me. Now I'm not sure whether I ever had a car at all.

Coach George E. Keegan has a winning percentage of .768 in his nine years of basketball at Notre Dame.

when she visited her family here.

**Farmer Aimed at Hog, But Shot Himself**

Poplar Bluff, Mo. — (UP) — The old farm chores of "hog killing" has been listed by W. B. Croslien farmer, as a dangerous occupation. He is in a hospital recovering from a shot through his foot. Croslien aimed at a hog to be butchered when his dog leaped in front of the hog. He lowered the gun suddenly and the shot passed through his foot.

## APARTMENTS 600 YEARS OLD

Austin, Tex. — (UP) — Imagine trying to rent an apartment dwelling in the Texas Panhandle six centuries ago. But such could have been done, providing one had the means of paying for it and the language by which to make known the want.

Too after renting the above, one might have gone shopping, purchased exquisite beads, bracelets, and necklaces of shell, transported from the Pacific coast.

For according to archaeological discoveries made by Floyd V. Stueder, of Amarillo, a virile and relatively advanced race dwelt along the Canadian River Valley, from what is now the New Mexico line to the Oklahoma line. These people lived in an advanced communal state of municipal life and their agriculture knew the benefits of experimentation.

Two large colonies of these people have been found. One is located 45 miles northeast of Amarillo, contains 29 rooms, and is 160 feet long and 50 feet wide. Another contains 33 rooms.

Scientists believe these people were distinct from the Pueblo Indians farther west and that they originated in the Mississippi Valley, or some eastern area. Their disappearance may have been due to starvation from drought, which made them again nomadic, or they may have been driven from their civilization by warring Indians and amalgamated with other Indians of the Southwest.

### Vassar Students Want

#### Nothing But the Truth

Fort Worth, Tex. — (UP) — John A. Lomax, Austin, collector of cowboy ballads, has found that Vassar students are satisfied with nothing but the whole truth.

When he visited Vassar, a committee of young women called on him before his formal appearance he related while visiting here. "We hear you have two lectures, one for mixed audiences and one for men only," they told him.

"We demand the 'men only' lecture," Lomax declined to say which lecture he gave.

### International Road

#### Work to Continue

Los Angeles — (UP) — Continued construction of the International Pacific highway link between Fairbanks, Alaska, and the Argentine, has been assured on the basis of word received here from Filiberto Gomez, Governor of the State of Mexico, Mexico.

Governor Gomez, in his message, declared that during 1933 the states of Sonora, Sinaloa and Jalisco will continue the road work with the aid of a federal subsidy of 15,000 pesos monthly.

### Last of Indian

#### Tribes Asks Pension

Trenton, N. J. — (UP) — The last of the once powerful Kickapoo Indians, Chief Red Cloud, has asked Governor Moore of New Jersey to intercede with the federal government so he can receive a pension.

Clad in his sachem's bonnet of wild turkey feathers, the aged chief appealed to the New Jersey executive for aid.

His tribe is now extinct, he is penniless and alone, and said he must have money to ease his dying days.

### Ready for Heaven

From L'Ilustre, Lausanne.  
Doctor: As I was saying, you are just coming around. I'm Doctor Peter, and I think—why, what is the matter?

Patient: You gave me such a shock for a moment. I thought you said you were Saint Peter.

### Just Two Weeks

Knoxville, Tenn. — It sure didn't take Mr. and Mrs. Simpson long to decide that they weren't for each other. Just two weeks after they were married Mrs. Simpson filed a divorce suit in domestic relations court.

### JUST IN CASE OF SICKNESS.

Last fall to stay wan hunger's pangs, Starvation c'en to rout,  
A group of friends in conclave met And made—some sauerkraut.

We sliced the cabbage crisp and fine And pounded in the salt.  
Until the big container's size Brought us at length to halt.

We sat it down in cellar dim; It manufactured juice,  
And when six weeks had rolled around,  
'Twas ready then for use.

We've had it fried with pork chops brown And baked with spare ribs sweet;  
And either way it's mighty good— A fodder fine to eat.

Why yearn for three inch porter-house,  
Or quail or fresh brook trout? Well regulated homes today,  
Have kegs of sauerkraut.  
—Sam Page

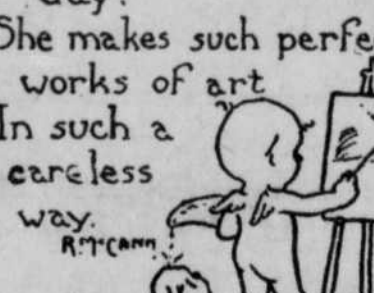
### Austrian Engineers

#### Claim New Invention

Washington — (UP) — Engineers in Austria claim to have invented a type of "Zig-Zag" steel grating road, costing about 15 cents a square foot and needing no maintenance for 20 years.

Engineers also claim, according to the Commerce Department, that a crew of six to eight workers can lay at the rate of one yard of steel grating on a 30-foot road in five minutes.

THE CHEERFUL CHERUB  
I envy Nature's sure technique  
In painting each new day.  
She makes such perfect works of art  
In such a careless way.




### CAPITAL'S BIG FAMILIES

While most big families are usually found in the small towns and on farms the District of Columbia boasts of many big families. According to the census bureau, of the total of 125,554 families living in the Nation's Capital 365 have more than 12 members, 309 have 11, and 629 have 10. Coming down the scale, there are 1,079 families in Washington with nine members; 2,034 with eight; 3,574 with seven; 6,644 with six; 11,753 with five; 19,542 with four; 26,422 with three, and 36,599 with two. There are more than 16,500 persons in the District who dwell alone.

STOPPED-UP NOSTRILS  
To open the nostrils and promote clear breathing use Mentholatum night and morning.  
MENTHOLATUM

That to Be Considered  
If you don't know a great deal, you have fewer problems.

WHEN SHE'S UPSET HE SUFFERS



### Constipation Drove Her Wild

made her feel cross, head-achy, half-alive. Now she has a lovely disposition, new pep and vitality. Heed Nature's warning: Sluggish bowels invariably result in poisonous wastes ravaging your system—often the direct cause of headaches, dizziness, colds, complexion troubles. NATURE'S REMEDY—the mild, all-vegetable laxative—safely stimulates the entire eliminative tract—strengthens, regulates the bowels for normal, natural functioning. Get a 25c box today at your druggist's.

TO-NIGHT TOMORROW AFTERNOON

"TUMS" Quick relief for acid indigestion, heartburn. Only 10c.

Trouble With Ideas  
"New Ideas can be good or bad just the same as old ones."

### Are You Nervous?

Women and Girls do not Need to Suffer So

Mrs. Chas. Zieske of R. R. 1, Rhodes, Iowa, says: "Three years ago I suffered a nervous breakdown, was in bed 2 1/2 months. Finally I got strong enough to walk around a little and that was about all. I took one bottle of Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription and saw results at once, so continued and it did wonders for me. When I began using it I weighed 95 pounds. Three months afterward I tipped the scales at 108."

Write Dr. Pierce's Clinic, Buffalo, N. Y.

Doan's Pills

A Diuretic for the Kidneys

### Have to Get Up at Night?

We sliced the cabbage crisp and fine And pounded in the salt.  
Until the big container's size Brought us at length to halt.

We sat it down in cellar dim; It manufactured juice,  
And when six weeks had rolled around,  
'Twas ready then for use.

We've had it fried with pork chops brown And baked with spare ribs sweet;  
And either way it's mighty good— A fodder fine to eat.

Why yearn for three inch porter-house,  
Or quail or fresh brook trout? Well regulated homes today,  
Have kegs of sauerkraut.  
—Sam Page

Deal Promptly with Bladder Irregularities

Are you bothered with bladder irregularities; burning, scanty or too frequent passage and getting up at night? Heed promptly these symptoms. They may warn of some disordered kidney or bladder condition. Users everywhere rely on Doan's Pills. Recommended for 50 years. Sold everywhere.

Doan's Pills

A Diuretic for the Kidneys

Doan's Pills

A Diuretic for the Kidneys

### Traffic Officer Granted 2-Year Leave of Absence

Lynn, Mass. — (UP) — Traffic Officer Cornelius P. Donovan has been granted a two-year leave of absence from the Lynn police force, following his election to the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

In addition to being a member of the bar, Donovan is an accomplished trumpet player, amateur actor, and was the only Lynn policeman to discard the mechan-

### Waitress Hitch-Hiked To New York Stage

Eau Claire, Wis. — (UP) — Hitch-hiking from a restaurant counter in Eau Claire to New York vaudeville is a record to be proud of, Miss Idella Alvestad, 20, former waitress here, told her friends when she returned for a visit.

Miss Alvestad said she hitch-hiked to New York and within three days of her arrival was

billied at the RKO Palace as a trick roller skater.

"I was just sitting in the crowd watching the show, when a man in a roller skating act asked if anyone in the crowd wanted to go for a ride," said Miss Alvestad. "Nobody knew me in New York, so I thought I'd go up just for the fun of it. They gave me quite a whirl and everybody clapped. The manager of the act offered me a job. I used to do a few tricks on skates at a rink here in Eau Claire, you know."

Miss Alvestad came by rail