MURDER By An ARISTOCRAT

Mignon G. Eberhart

They were Janice and Allen Carick. And now that I've come to tell it I find that after all there is very little to tell. The significance lay entirely in their look, and that was only a kind of stillness, as if they shared some tremendous and vital understanding. They didn't speak; they just stood there for a moment. Then Allen put out his arms, and I thought he was going to take Janice into them. He took her hands, however, instead, and looked at them for a moment as if he might never see them again in all the world, and then held them against his eyes. And Janice lifted her face with all its beauty in full flame, and yet so white and spent-looking that I did not see how the man could gently relinquish her hands and step back. But he did just that, although he too was white under his tan, and he watched her turn and mount the stairs with a look of such sheer agony in his young eyes that I felt indecent witnessing it. Then he was gone; beyond the screen I saw his hand on the latch and then heard his quick steps across the porch.

It had lasted only a moment. And I felt shaken and pitiful, as if I had seen the sacrifice of something living and very lovely.

Which was, I told myself impatiently as I continued on my way, not only sentimental and maudlin, it was entirely without morals on my part. While I have never married and in all likelihood never shall, still I have my views about matrimony. I have always felt that flirtatiousness in a married woman is due to a sort of compound of vanity, idleness, and not enough spankings as a child.

But that moment in the hall had been real. And I suppose people do fall in love sometimes whether they want to or not. And how can they know it until it's happened?

This untimely reflection threatened my own self-respect, and it was with further chagrin that I found I had brought up at the door of the room which had been Bayard Thatcher's with my hand on the doorknob.

I drew it away sharply. The hall was long and empty and but dimly lighted. Was it only last night that I'd stood there watching in that mirror the reflection of a door closing? Since then murder had been at large in the silent house. Had ravaged the peace of a summer day; had charged the tranquil dignity of the house with fear and violence.

Where there's been murder there will be murder.

As if by physical motion I could remove myself from that unwelcome thought, I stirred and walked hurriedly to Adela's door, knocked, and at her word entered.

It was not more than an hour later that I came upon the letter.

Dr. Bouligny, in leaving, had ordered me to give Adela a rather heavy opiate to insure her rest during the long hours of the night, and I was fumbling in my instrument bag for the case which held a hypodermic needle when my fingers encountered an envelope, tucked well out of sight. It was not addressed. I opened it and took out the sheet of paper it held.

It was part of a letter. I never knew exactly why it was in my bag, although I was to surmise with, I think, a fair degree of accuracy. I did not realize what it was until I'd read a portion of it, and then I could not stop. Not that I'm making apology for what I did; still it was quite evidently a letter meant for only one pair of eyes. The first of it was gone; the written words leaped to my gaze:

". . . freedom and taking love when it comes and living your own life. But it's all wrong. It doesn't take into account—well, just integrity. One's measures of honesty and pride. I can't leave Dave. Though God knows I've reason to, poor Dave.

"You must go. I can't bear seeing you. It's terrible to write that and to know that my moments of living are those moments when I can see you, expect you, hear you speak. Such a few moments out of all the years and years, so brief—all the rest such a dreadful waste.

"I'm growing hysterical; I must stop. I'll put this in a pocket of your coat. You left it on the porch. I loathe myself for doing it in such a way. But I must make you understand, and I can't say all this—not while you're near me. Believe me, there isn't a way out of it; not any way we can take.

"After all, we'll forget. People do. That's worse than anything. But it's true. Janice."

For a moment I stood there holding that sheet of paper under the light. Then deliberately I read it again.

It was without doubt a compromising letter; I was torn with disapproval and a kind of reluctant pity. After all, she had tried to be honest; it was a bit hysterical, but emotion is apt to sound like that. And it was sincere and direct and entirely lacked that theatrical quality of artificial romance with which women so often invest their letters, as if they were seeing themselves in some romantic role.

Somehow I assumed that the letter was meant for Allen, and I was feeling sorry for them all, Dave and Janice and Allen, caught in such a tragic mesh. But was it Allen? Could it have been Bayard Thatcher— Bayard, dead now, his harsh smile gone? He had had access to my instrument bag, not Allen. Bayard also she might conceivably have begged to go. Perhaps Dave had discovered it. He seemed to be a neurotic type: A man who would act first and reason afterward. But Dave and Allen had been fishing together all the afternoon. And I had seen Janice with Allen there at the foot of the stairs. No, the man she loved was Allen. But Janice herself — Janice herself had been in the house alone with Bayard for fully five minutes before the murder was discovered! Until that very moment I had forgotten it. Upon their return she and Adela had got out of the car together, but she had gone directly into the house, while Adela lingered among the flowers and talked to me. It could have been only five minutes at the longest, possibly less than that, but it does not take long to send a bullet speeding to its target. It was incredible—but who else was there?

There was a light knock on the door of the adjoining bedroom. I heard Adela speak and then scream. It was a sharp, sucking sound, that scream; like taffeta when it tears.

Then I was in the bedroom, too.

Adela was sitting upright in bed. Her eyes were blank and hard, and her mouth tight. You'd never have guessed she had just screamed.

Emmeline stood near the bed. In one hand she carried the brown wicker egg basket. There were still some eggs in it.

In her other hand she held a revolver.

"I found—" she said, and saw me and stopped.

CHAPTER VI

Afterwards it seemed strange to me and a little sad that the curious understanding which had existed probably for so many years between mistress and maid should have failed at that crucial moment. For Adela opened her lips and said in a hoarse kind of whisper:

"Take it away."

And I'm sure Emmeline thought she asked where she'd found the revolver, for the woman said:

"It was in the egg basket, in the refrigerator. It's Mr. Dave's. There's two shots out of it." She held the revolver almost at arm's length, looked at it reflectively, and added, "You ought to feel how cold it is, being in the icebox."

Adela closed her eyes.

"Put it on the table, here," she said. "That's all, Emmeline."

After the maid had stalked away again, bearing her basket of eggs, Adela lay there for a moment, marshaling her forces, and then opened her eyes and said wearily:

"It's strange that Dave's revolver should turn up in the egg basket. But it means nothing. Nothing. The revolver was likely in the coupe when Janice took it out this afternoon, and she dropped it into the egg basket, intending to take it into the house and put it away, and then she forgot about it. Yes, that's what happened. You can see for yourself, Miss Keate, that it couldn't have been the revolver with which—" a small spasm contorted her mouth as she said stiffly—"with which Bayard was shot. But I'm going to ask you to say nothing of this, please. Dr. Bouligny is a good man, and he means well, but he's a bit stupid. He might think— Well, it's best, I think, not to confuse things."

"A ballistics expert would soon know whether that was the revolver that killed Bayard, if that's what you mean," I said crisply. The variety of experience which falls to a nurse's lot has given me some slight acquaintance with crime. Besides, I read newspapers.

My comment did not please Adela. She looked coldly at me.

"Surely you don't think a burglar would not only use Dave's revolver, but would hide it in the egg basket in the kitchen refrigerator," she said frigidly. "Besides, he wouldn't have had time. If you'll give me the medicine Dr. Bouligny ordered, I'll go to sleep."

And when I stood beside the bed a few moments later with the hypodermic needle ready in my hand, I glanced at the table. The revolver was gone; I knew she must have placed it in some drawer in the room, and I could certainly have found it—could find it later on, if I felt it my duty to bring the matter to the coroner's attention.

She went to sleep almost immediately. I was adjusting the window preparatory to leaving her when Pansy scratched and whined at the door. I let her in; she waddled breathlessly over to the bed, gave Adela's hand which lay on the edge an abstracted lick and retreated to a cushion in the corner. She was still nervous and watched me suspiciously and with not too flattering attention as I moved about the room.

It was with a touch of uneasiness that I entered the room next door, which I was to have, and snapped on the light. I remember I glanced rather quickly about, under the bed and into the old wardrobe and back of the screen, before I closed and locked the door. Yet I can't say there was any definite thing that I feared. It was something impalpable; quite intangible. Murder as a word is only a word; but murder as an actuality, dragged into the calm circumference of one's own living, is a violent and cyclonic experience.

The Thatchers were what we call nice people. They were temperate, self controlled, proud. They did not lack courage, they scorned dishonesty, and their emotions were orderly. People of that sort do not breed murderers. But Bayard Thatcher had been murdered. Even that night, before I had time or inclination to try to arrive at any conclusion as to who had murdered him — even then, I felt instinctively that it was one of the Thatchers. Otherwise it would not, perhaps, have been so terrible and so profoundly exciting an experience. It is true it seemed entirely incredible to think that under that placid, calm, well ordered surface strange and turbulent and violent emotions were seething. Emotions which must have had their roots far, far beyond the somewhat paradoxical but rigidly ordered state of affairs we call civilization and which excludes murder.

Contrary to my expectations I fell at once into a heavy, dreamless sleep; I was, of course, desperately weary. The night—clear and moonlit—was, so far as I know, entirely peaceful. I do not believe there were, even, any tears for Bayard.

It was morning when I awoke with a start and a conviction that I had heard the continued barking of a dog somewhere near. It had ceased, however, by the time I was thoroughly awake, and I did not hear it again. It was a warm, placid summer morning, too warm even at that hour, but pleasant and quiet. The horror of the thing that had happened swept back into my consciousness with a kind of incredulous shock.

I hurried a little about dressing. My fears of the night seemed unreal as I unlocked and opened the door on a peaceful sunlit hall. Adela's door was closed, and she did not respond to my knock, so I went quietly away; it would be a good thing to let her sleep as late as possible. Not a soul was about upstairs, though I met Florrie in the lower hall. Her green chambray was fresh and clean as always, but her cap was crooked, and she gave me a rather sullen good morning. I stopped for a moment in the doorway, I remember, to glance out across the porch and the lovely sunny lawns. When I turned she had arrested herself in the very act of dusting a table and was looking fixedly over her shoulder at me. She dropped her eyes at once and began to wield the duster vigorously, and when I said, "A pleasant morning," she muttered something unintelligible and turned into the library.

I walked on down the hall. As I reached the diningroom door something made me turn. The girl was standing half in, half out the library door watching me. She bobbed out of sight, but not before I had caught a strangely sullen look in her plain face. It vaguely disturbed me; it was as if she were accusing me of something.

Evelyn was sitting behind the tall silver coffee service. Apparently she had not gone home for the night, for she still wore the light summer gown, a flowered chiffon, which she had worn the previous afternoon. It looked gay and out of place, especially when Janice, who followed my entrance by a moment or two, appeared in a crisp white linen morning frock.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Chicago Population Increased 49,000

Chicago —UP)— Chicago's population was increased 49,000 in 1932, bringing the total number of resident's in the nation's second largest city to 3,524,000, it was disclosed by J. E. Vesley, research director of the Association of Commerce.

The increase was under the average annual growth of 67,500 of the past decade, Vesley pointed out, but added that it was comparatively greater than that of other metropolitan centers.

Vesley estimated Chicago's unemployed at 656,000, approximately 38 per cent of the city's total workers.

MODERN LIFE TOO MUCH FOR "BIDDY"

Intimations are not lacking that nature is weary of the incessant efforts of science to introduce the element of supersalesmanship into her processes, forcing her to multiply her old, leisurely productivity a hundred and a thousandfold. She has been pushed too far. It is now 25 or 30 years since egg-laying contests in New England began to attract general attention. Poultry breeders from across the sea brought their flocks here to compete with our native strains. Amazing records were established, the result of scientific feeding, of splitting up large flocks into small colonies. Unless memory is at fault Mrs. Ignace Paderewski paid $2,000 for a champion layer. Settings of eggs of certain prolific breeds fetched fancy prices.

Up to that point the egg-laying faculty of the hen had been stimulated along the line of her hereditary instincts—proper food, favorable surroundings. But now, science stepped in. More and more the mother hen was bereft of her clutch so that it might be hatched in an incubator and the progeny be reared in a brooder. The hen was reduced to the condition of a mere egg-laying machine. All her maternal solicitude was denied an outlet. Not only that: the science-crazed poultrymen, in their eagerness to get the very last egg from their layers, began to try to fool the birds by flooding their houses with artificial light an hour before dawn in the morning and for an hour after dusk at night. By thus lengthening their apparent day it was hoped to get the birds to work unnaturally overtime—lay seven eggs a week apiece where four were laid before.

But in spite of all the dreams of science, it was not long before there were signs that the limits of a hen's laying capacity had been reached. The hen began to ask herself what she got out of it. Life, which to her ancestors had been one of infinite variety, was for her nothing but one confounded egg after another, and every egg snatched away just as she felt the fever of incubation coming upon her. Lovers of nature are not surprised, therefore, to read the admissions of a Massachusetts authority on poultry that "the intensive life of the modern hen is terribly increasing the mortality in model poultry plants; the birds are worn out before their time." A hen which under the conditions prevailing formerly would have gone on laying well for several years is now done for at the end of her first season—good only for the pot, and with little meat on her bones at that, so wasted is she from her labors. Perhaps this lesson of the futility of forcing the hen beyond her powers may not be lost upon those who are leaving nature out of the account in some other fields of activity, human and otherwise.—Exchange.

POISON

in Your bowels!

Poisons absorbed into the system from souring waste in the bowels, cause that dull, headachy, sluggish, bilious condition; coat the tongue; foul the breath; sap energy, strength and nerve-force. A little of Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin will clear up trouble like that, gently, harmlessly, in a hurry. The difference it will make in your feelings over night will prove its merit to you.

Dr. Caldwell studied constipation for over forty-seven years. This long experience enabled him to make his prescription just what men, women, old people and children need to make their bowels help themselves. Its natural, mild, thorough action and its pleasant taste commend it to everyone. That's why "Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin," as it is called, is the most popular laxative drugstores sell.

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SYRUP PEPSIN
A Doctor's Family Laxative

AT THE FIRST SNEEZE USE
Mistol
NIGHT AND MORNING
Fight COLDS 2 ways
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BAYER **SAFE!** BAYER

The popularity of Bayer Aspirin is due in large measure to its speed. There is no quicker form of relief for a bad headache, neuralgia, neuritis, or other severe pain. But even more important is its *safety*. Anyone can take Bayer Aspirin. It does not depress the heart. It does not upset the stomach.

No one need ever hesitate to take Bayer Aspirin because of its speedy action. Its rapid relief is due to the rapidity with which tablets of Bayer manufacture dissolve. You could take them every day in the year without any ill effects.

For your pocket, buy the tin of 12 tablets. For economy, bottles of 100 at the new reduced price.

And Bayer has Speed!

Railroads Must Speed Up, Major Declares

Ogden, Utah. —(UP)— Railroads of the nation must speed up their service if they are to compete with air travel or even the automobile, Mayor Louis Marcus of Salt Lake City, told the General Contractors of America intermountain branch.

By reducing trains to two or three cars, pulled by steam, gasoline or electric locomotives, driven by propellors, Marcus said, the railroads could maintain an average speed of 125 miles per hour. There has been little development in the railroads during the past 20 years, and trains move at about the same speed. They have not met the changes of times and will soon be driven from competition, he asserted.

Aged Men Are Worst Drivers, Sergeant Avers

Kinston, N. C. — (UP) — The worst driver on the road?

It isn't the youngster in a hurry to get nowhere; nor the "muttonheaded Negro from the country" nor the woman who doesn't look where she's going.

No, says Sgt. Arthur Moore, of the state police, you won't find the worst driver among those groups.

He will turn out, Sgt. Moore told the Rotary club here, to be the man who learned to drive at an advanced age; who drives very slowly and sees only the things in front of him, and who is probably thinking about his cotton crop.

LOSES DIME—FINDS $100

Houston, Tex—Mrs. E. M. Bratton, bank teller, unfolds a queer tale. A jobless plumber recently approached her, an anxious look on his face, and asked her whether a one hundred dollar bill he had was a good one. After Mrs. Bratton assured him the bill was good, he told her that he had found it—after losing a dime. The dime, the last coin he had, slipped and rolled into a crack in the floor of his bathroom. In searching for it with a piece of wire, he pulled out the bill. He was able to send his sick wife to a hospital with the money.

Female grasshoppers will lay from 600 to 800 eggs at a time.

WOMAN LOST 10 LBS. IN A WEEK

Mrs. Betty Luedeke of Dayton writes: "I am using Kruschen to reduce weight—I lost 10 pounds in one week and cannot say too much to recommend it."

To take off fat easily, SAFELY and HARMLESSLY—take one half teaspoonful of Kruschen in a glass of hot water in the morning before breakfast—it is the safe way to lose unsightly fat and one bottle that lasts 4 weeks costs but a trifle. Get it at any drugstore in America. If this first bottle fails to convince you this is the safest way to lose fat—money back.

But be sure and get Kruschen Salts—imitations are numerous and you must safeguard your health.

Kidneys bother you?

Heed promptly bladder irregularities, getting up at night and nagging backache. They may warn of some disordered kidney or bladder condition. Users everywhere rely on *Doan's Pills*. Praised for more than 50 years by grateful users the country over. Sold by all druggists.

DOAN'S PILLS
A DIURETIC FOR THE KIDNEYS