

THE MYSTERY GIRL

By CAROLYN WELLS. (Copyright, 1922.)

Clearly, she was rejoiced at her decision, there's no gainsaying that. nunciation of the girl before her, and pleased at the irrefutable theory she had promulgated. "And how did Miss Austin or the Jap, either, leave the room locked on the inside?" propounded Cray, his own opinions already avowed by the arrangement.

"That," said Miss Bascom, with an air of finality, "I can't explain definitely, but I am sure it was an example of Japanese jugglery. When you remember the tales of how the Japanese can do seemingly impossible tricks, can swallow swords and get out of locked handcuffs, it is quite within the realm of possibility that one could lock a door behind him, and give it the appearance of having been locked from the inside."

Now, Cray had already concluded that the door had been cleverly locked by someone, but he hadn't before thought of the cleverness of the Japanese. He rose almost abruptly, and said, "I must look into some of these matters. Miss Austin, you need not attempt to leave town, for you will not be able to do so."

Her dignity gave no effect of a person afraid or alarmed for her own safety, merely a courteous recognition of Cray's attitude, and a frank statement of her own intentions. Miss Bascom sniffed and said: "Don't worry, Mr. Cray. I'll see to it that this young woman does not succeed in evading justice, if she tries to do so."

At which Miss Mystery gave her a smile that was so patronizing, even amused, that the spinner was more irate than ever. "And now, Miss Austin," the attorney said, "I'll take your fingerprints, please, as they may be useful in proving what you did not do."

He smiled a little as the girl readily enough gave her consent to the procedure. "All right," he went on, more gravely, "I will ask you for one of your shoes—one that you wore on Sunday."

Surprised into a glance of dismay, Miss Mystery rose without a word and went upstairs for the shoe.

"No; just passing over it with his hand. "That isn't dusting it." "Well, I don't know what you call it! Perhaps he was merely pushing the chair into place. He was erasing indicative marks on that plush chairback—that's what he was doing."

"Absurd!" Helen cried, "what marks could there be?" "I don't know. Come and let us see." Cray took Helen to the study, and asked her to sit in the chair. "Lean back," he directed. Now, get up.

The girl obeyed, and there was plainly seen on the plush the faint but unmistakable imprint of the back of the dress she wore. "I told you so!" Cray said, in triumph. "That plush registers every impress, and when Lockwood rubbed it smooth it was to erase a damaging bit of testimony."

"That's my business," Cray said, sharply; "now, Mr. Lockwood, why then, indeed, one can scarcely doubt it, when it is shown that this shoe of hers, he took it from his pocket, 'exactly fits the prints that cross the field of snow between here and the Adams house.'"

"The prints are exactly as they were made, Mr. Lockwood. The unchanging cold weather has kept them intact. I tried this shoe, and the prints are unmistakable. Moreover, the short stride is just the measure of the natural steps of Miss Austin. The footprints lead from the Adams house over here and back again. The returning prints occasionally overlap the ones that came this way, showing that the trip away from this house was made latest. Miss Austin was seen to come over in this direction—well, none but a half-wit would be blind to the inevitable conclusion!"

"None but a half-wit would read into this evidence what you pretend to see," retorted Lockwood, almost losing his calm. "I am not under oath. I have stated that I did not know what you did you smooth off that chair back, careful, now, two witnesses saw you do it."

"I'm not denying it!"—Lockwood smiled in a bored, superior way, "but if I did it, it was—and am unconscious of it. One often touches a piece of furniture in passing with no thought of doing so."

"That won't go down. Both the butler and Miss Peyton saw you definitely and deliberately rub over the back of that chair. Why did you do it?" Cray was inexorable. But the impassive secretary merely shrugged his shoulders. "I can't answer you, Mr. Cray. I can only repeat it must have been an unconscious act on my part, and it has no sinister significance. I may have been merely pushing the chair out of my way, you know."

"Look here, Mr. Lockwood, you are a man of honor. Do you, upon oath, declare that you did not purposely smooth that chairback, for the reason that it showed some incriminating impress?" "I am not under oath. I have stated that I did not know what you

then, indeed, one can scarcely doubt it, when it is shown that this shoe of hers, he took it from his pocket, "exactly fits the prints that cross the field of snow between here and the Adams house." "To measure footprints—after all this time!" and Lockwood's lip curled.

"The prints are exactly as they were made, Mr. Lockwood. The unchanging cold weather has kept them intact. I tried this shoe, and the prints are unmistakable. Moreover, the short stride is just the measure of the natural steps of Miss Austin. The footprints lead from the Adams house over here and back again. The returning prints occasionally overlap the ones that came this way, showing that the trip away from this house was made latest. Miss Austin was seen to come over in this direction—well, none but a half-wit would be blind to the inevitable conclusion!"

"None but a half-wit would read into this evidence what you pretend to see," retorted Lockwood, almost losing his calm. "I am not under oath. I have stated that I did not know what you

did you smooth off that chair back, careful, now, two witnesses saw you do it." "I'm not denying it!"—Lockwood smiled in a bored, superior way, "but if I did it, it was—and am unconscious of it. One often touches a piece of furniture in passing with no thought of doing so."

"That won't go down. Both the butler and Miss Peyton saw you definitely and deliberately rub over the back of that chair. Why did you do it?" Cray was inexorable. But the impassive secretary merely shrugged his shoulders. "I can't answer you, Mr. Cray. I can only repeat it must have been an unconscious act on my part, and it has no sinister significance. I may have been merely pushing the chair out of my way, you know."

"Look here, Mr. Lockwood, you are a man of honor. Do you, upon oath, declare that you did not purposely smooth that chairback, for the reason that it showed some incriminating impress?" "I am not under oath. I have stated that I did not know what you

did you smooth off that chair back, careful, now, two witnesses saw you do it." "I'm not denying it!"—Lockwood smiled in a bored, superior way, "but if I did it, it was—and am unconscious of it. One often touches a piece of furniture in passing with no thought of doing so."

"That won't go down. Both the butler and Miss Peyton saw you definitely and deliberately rub over the back of that chair. Why did you do it?" Cray was inexorable. But the impassive secretary merely shrugged his shoulders. "I can't answer you, Mr. Cray. I can only repeat it must have been an unconscious act on my part, and it has no sinister significance. I may have been merely pushing the chair out of my way, you know."

"Look here, Mr. Lockwood, you are a man of honor. Do you, upon oath, declare that you did not purposely smooth that chairback, for the reason that it showed some incriminating impress?" "I am not under oath. I have stated that I did not know what you

accuse me of, and I have nothing further to say on the subject." Lockwood drew himself up and leaned with folded arms against the mantelpiece. Cray dropped the subject, but his snapping eyes and compressed lips seemed to show he had not finally dismissed it. "At what time," he said abruptly, "did Dr. Waring lock his study door?" "About 10 o'clock," the secretary replied. "And you heard nothing from the room after that? No sound of voices? Nobody coming in at the French window?" "No," replied Lockwood. "Then we are forced to the conclusion that whoever entered did so very quietly, that it was with the knowledge and permission of Dr. Waring himself, that the visitor was the person whose footprints led straight to the door, and whose fingerprints are on the chair that stood near the doctor's own chair. We are borne out in this view by the fact that the same person now possesses the money and the ruby pin which we know Dr.

Waring had in his room with him, and we know that the person is here in Corinth for unexplained reasons, and is, in fact, so peculiar that she is known as—Miss Mystery. Just why, Mr. Lockwood, are you arguing against these obvious inferences, and why do you undertake to free from suspicion one against whom everything is so definitely black?" "Because," Lockwood spoke very quietly, but his jaw was set in a stubborn way, "the lady you call Miss Mystery is a young and defenseless girl, without, so far as I know, a friend in town. It is unfair to accuse her on the strength of this fantastic story and it is unfair to condemn her unheard."

"Not unheard," said the attorney, "but what she says only incriminates her more deeply." The funeral services of John Waring were solemn and impressive. No reference was made to the manner of his taking off, save to call it mysterious, and the eulogiums heaped upon him by the clergy and the college faculty were as sincere as they were well-deserved.

There were two members of the great audience who were looked at with curiosity by many. One of these was Miss Mystery, the girl who, it was vaguely rumored, was in some way connected with the tragedy. (To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

MR. BUSINESS MAN Do you want a young live wire in your organization? One who has studied business law and banking, also knows real estate from selling to abstracting. At present with large Colorado corporation, but for best of reasons wants to move family to Nebraska. Can take responsibility, yet not egotistical. Write Box 82, San Luis, Colorado.

BEE WANT ADS BRING RESULTS

Uncle Sam Says Satisfactory Home Heating. The satisfactory and efficient heating of homes requires that the chimney flue be of proper size and in the proper place; that a proper heating equipment be installed correctly; that the plant be thoroughly understood and operated in a manner to give the maximum return from the fuel consumed; that the house construction be so tight that heat is confined within and cold air kept out; that the air be kept humidified in the room to the correct degree as possible; and that fresh air be admitted continuously or from time to time in sufficient quantity to obtain the proper carbonic acid dimutina.

AC Did Your Ford Start Hard This Morning? Hard starting and poor performance in cold weather have always been had enough, but these difficulties become worse each year because of fuel conditions. Spark plugs with ordinary smooth-surface porcelain permit an accumulation of soot, particularly when the choker is used to any extent. Upon stopping the engine in cold weather the gummy deposit on the surface of the porcelain will harden, causing short circuit and making it almost impossible to start.

STATEMENT OF Nebraska Savings and Loan Association Thirty-eighth Year - - - - - Est. 1885 At Opening of Business January 1, 1923 RESOURCES Real Estate Loans \$2,007,500.00 Loans on Association stock 18,221.98 Real Estate Sold on Contract 2,368.10 Real Estate 1,586.97 Loans in Foreclosure 5,666.30 Accrued Interest on Bonds and Warrants 369.83 Interest due from borrowers 43,084.40 U. S. Liberty Bonds 111,280.22 Municipal Bonds and Warrants 103,493.62 Cash on hand and in bank 257,858.24 \$2,293,571.42 LIABILITIES Dues paid and dividends added \$2,166,421.53 Reserve Fund 50,000.00 Undivided Profits 16,810.49 Incomplete Loans 60,339.40 \$2,293,571.42

"THIRTY-ONE YEARS OF SERVICE" The Conservative Savings and Loan Association of Omaha (UNDER SUPERVISION OF STATE BANKING BOARD) Financial Statement, January 1, 1923 Loans on improved city real estate \$13,062,100.00 Loans on improved farms 4,264,050.00 Loans in foreclosure 54,091.47 Real Estate—Sales on contract 63,908.38 Loans on pass book security 164,944.23 Accrued interest 37,862.69 Office building and lot 81,000.00 N. W. corner 18th and Farnam (132x132) Future Home of Association 240,000.00 Bonds and Warrants \$329,593.03 United States Bonds 715,446.00 Cash on hand and in banks 521,173.80— 1,566,212.83 TOTAL \$19,534,169.60

A State with Considerable Dimension "We dined last evening in Nebraska," said a prominent Japanese banker on his way to Washington, "and we breakfast this morning in Nebraska, yet we have traveled rapidly and continuously all the night. This territory you call Nebraska must have a considerable dimension in at least one direction." So it has—east and west—also north and south. And a considerable dimension perpendicularly—as one will realize who checks up on Nebraska's production of farm crops. All who come to Nebraska are impressed with its extent, its wealth, its evidence of continuous and permanent prosperity. It is a privilege to be the leading agricultural publication of such a great agricultural state as Nebraska.

Occidental Building & Loan Association at opening of business January 1, 1923 RESOURCES Real Estate Loans \$ 9,278,955.59 Stock Loans 41,905.07 Office Building 248,000.00 Real Estate 20,674.44 Real Estate Sold on Contract 40,656.21 Accrued Interest on Real Estate Loans 60,658.65 Accrued Interest on Securities 8,758.72 Loans in Foreclosure 122,994.44 State and Municipal Securities 49,833.70 U. S. Treasury and Liberty Bonds 297,850.00 Cash on Hand and in Banks 283,190.56 \$10,444,277.38 LIABILITIES Capital Stock \$ 9,943,651.04 Incomplete Loans 72,451.25 Reserve Fund 428,050.00 Undivided Profits 125.09 \$10,444,277.38 Increase in Assets for Year Ending December 31, 1922 \$1,065,613.44

Financial Statement of the Omaha Loan and Building Association December 31, 1922 ASSETS Loans on First Mortgages \$22,826,313.06 Loans on Association Shares of Stock 469,010.95 Interest Due from Members 9,836.33 Real Estate acquired through foreclosure 1,275.39 Foreclosures pending 7,500.87 Furniture and Fixtures 10,000.00 Association Building 450,000.00 Sundry Persons and Accounts 16,259.04 Cash on hand and in banks 676,422.85 Bonds and Warrants 86,833.11 Liberty Bonds 36,350.00 Total Assets \$24,589,801.60 LIABILITIES Running Stock and Dividends \$22,424,726.95 Paid-up Stock and Dividends 1,132,656.36 Due Sundry Persons on account incomplete loans 437,066.26 Reserve Fund and Undivided Earnings 595,352.03 Total Liabilities \$24,589,801.60 Dividends earned for members during the year \$1,049,117.56 Dividends earned for members since organization \$6,956,140.79