

TWO NIGHTS IN A COFFIN TRAP HIS FAITHLESS WIFE

A Grand Guignol "Thriller" in Real Life, This Unusual and Uncomfortable Stratagem by Which a Rich Swedish Merchant Secured Divorce from the Wife Who Loved Another



Mrs. Karl Peterson, the Divorced Wife.

It is not often that real life supplies the peculiar sort of plot required in the hair-raising plays which have made the Theatre Grand Guignol, of Paris, famous the world over. Yet a divorce case just tried in Stockholm, Sweden, presented evidence that shows a faithless wife and her male accomplice to have figured in scenes that could hardly be improved upon at the Grand Guignol, where the essential stage "props" are coffins and shrouds, bottles of vitriol and knives dripping with stage blood.

It is unfortunately true that wives are occasionally faithless in actual life, as well as upon the stage. And the same applies to husbands. Divorce court records reveal many ingenious ruses whereby wives and husbands have secured evidence of the faithlessness of their wedded partners; but this appears to be the first instance of a husband accomplishing such a feat by having himself pronounced dead and placed in a coffin ready for burial.

It is the feat that was successfully performed by Karl Peterson, a well-to-do citizen of the Swedish capital. Upon evidence thus obtained the court granted him a divorce from the handsome woman to whom he had been married barely a year.

Owing to her beauty and many charming accomplishments, Mrs. Peterson's former suitors and admirers were not altogether discouraged by the fact of her marriage to one of the wealthiest merchants of Stockholm. Several of them became frequent guests at the Peterson home. One in particular—a certain dashing young society man named Sven Egstrom—shortly became a recognized family friend of the type that, in this country and England, is called "tame cat."

Several months ago Peterson became suspicious that Egstrom was exceeding his duties as bundle-carrier and general "tame cat" about the house. In fact, he more than believed that the bond between his charming bride and Egstrom was of a nature that was reflecting upon his own honor. Peterson vainly endeavored to prove or disprove his suspicions, and then resolved upon spinning the strange web which an erring wife ever was entangled.

thrown back on its hinges, so that sorrowing relatives might view the features of the dead merchant.

These preparations were complete some time before the arrival of Mrs. Peterson. She arrived from the railway station in an automobile—escorted by the faithful Egstrom. The physician met them at the door.

"My poor, dear husband!" said the wife. "Do tell me that he is better."

A housemaid, visible in the hall, threw her apron over her face and burst into tears.

"Calm yourself," said the physician. "Your poor husband suffered very little."

"Oh, he's dead! My darling husband is dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Peterson.

The grief of the housemaid told all. Egstrom, the family friend, quietly effaced himself, for the time being. The physician conducted the sorrowing wife into the library. He received her fainting form in his arms—for one glance at the white face in the coffin assured her that fainting was now in order. Then he carried her to her room and delivered her over to the ministrations of the sincerely sorrowing housemaid.

Mrs. Peterson was too much overcome to appear at dinner. The physician found it convenient to remain for the night. It gave him secret pleasure to dine with Egstrom and listen to that gentleman's mournful acknowledgment of the late Peterson's innumerable graces of mind and heart.

Mrs. Peterson did not leave her room that night. Egstrom retired early to the chamber allotted to him.

The butler busied himself in the kitchen behind closed doors preparing a nourishing broth that could be safely taken by a dead man without bringing any tinct of life to his cheeks.

The physician watched beside the coffin. Toward midnight he was awakened by a loud yawn. For a moment, confused by a dream, he was startled at the sight of Peterson sitting up in his coffin and drumming impatiently on its lid with his fingers.

"Did she come?" asked Peterson, who, in the interests of the conspiracy, had lain all this time unconscious under the influence of a drug.

"She came," said the physician. "When she gazed on your dead face she fainted—as I was there ready to catch her. We took her to her room, and she hasn't left it since. Egstrom was with her, of course."

"Did the fellow stay?" asked the "corpse" eagerly.

"He did. We dined together and he recalled all your excellent qualities."

"Good," said the corpse. "Now kindly tell Olesen to bring me that bowl of broth. I'm famished—and it's my only dead man's chance to eat."

Sitting up in his coffin, with the folded lid for a table, Peterson consumed his broth with evident relish.

"How about a bit of steak?" he inquired. The physician promptly vetoed solid food and advanced with his hypodermic needle.

"Not yet," pleaded the corpse. "In fact,

I won't need any more of your dope. There won't be any more attention paid to me—no till I play my little joker."

"If you fall asleep naturally you may snore," warned the physician.

"Naturally I won't fall asleep," said the corpse. "From now on this is a wide-awake job."

"Nothing can happen for six or eight hours yet," observed the doctor. "You'd better get some sleep while you can."

But Peterson was restless in his narrow quarters, and to get out to stretch his legs and to get back in again would disarrange the coffin's upholstery. So he suggested a game of cribbage.

"I'll play you for the amount of your bill," he said with a grim smile.

"Which bill? Doctor or undertaker?"

"Both, in their natural order," Peterson came back at the facetious physician.

So the doctor brought cards and cribbage board, placed them on the folded coffin lid, and the game began. The corpse "pegged" rapidly away from his opponent, winning three straight games.

"That settles the doctor's bill," he said. "Reach into that box on the desk and give me a cigar."

They lighted cigars and proceeded with the other half of the contest—best two out of three. As the coming dawn revealed itself through the window the doctor threw down his cards, beaten.

"And that disposes of the undertaker's bill," remarked the corpse with much satisfaction.

Right here Olesen, the butler, entered noiselessly after breakfast.

"Mr. Egstrom is up, ready for breakfast. Mrs. Peterson has ordered her breakfast in her room, sir."

The corpse bobbed down into its coffin, white hands folded across his breast. The doctor threw himself into an easy chair, lit a cigar and busied himself to account for the funereal atmosphere of the room.

But these precautions proved unnecessary. The Peterson country house being isolated, there were no callers. Mrs. Peterson and Egstrom went out for a drive immediately after breakfast. Mrs. Peterson was sure that the doctor would make all arrangements. She was "too overcome to be of any use." She and her "kind escort" probably would not return until evening.

The corpse spent a long day between unsatisfying cat naps and bowls of most inadequate broth. Egstrom and Mrs. Peterson returned barely in time for dinner, after which they retired to their respective rooms. The physician agreed with the corpse that it might excite suspicion if he remained any longer. So he departed immediately after dinner.

"Good!" sighed the corpse. "Another night of it."

But he stuck to his resolution not to risk anything by getting out of his coffin. During this long second night the butler was his victim at cribbage. At dawn the poor butler was as nearly dead from lack of sleep as the corpse looked—once more serenely stretched out in his coffin awaiting developments.

Those developments came early—immediately after breakfast, when Mrs. Peterson and Egstrom took together in the small breakfast room adjoining the library. Peterson could hear their cheerful conversation.



"Peterson sat up in his coffin. Mrs. Peterson and Egstrom, not two yards away, were clasped in each other's arms."

After breakfast the unsuspecting couple entered the library, carefully closing the door after them. They barely glanced at the coffin, never once looking inside, where Peterson lay with a most undeath-like flush of exasperation on his countenance.

Mrs. Peterson went directly to the telephone. Peterson heard her calling up one of his most intimate business associates. In tones that were so cheerful as to be almost gay she announced the joyous fact of her husband's death.

"The will leaves everything to me, you know," telephoned Mrs. Peterson. "I shall be rich—and you know what that means, naughty boy!"

Peterson could hardly restrain himself. It was lucky he did, for now he heard the voice of Egstrom tenderly rebuking Mrs. Peterson for holding out false hopes to the

"fool at the other end of the wire."

"La, la! Let me have my little joke with the old reprobate," said Mrs. Peterson. "You know, Duckie, that I love no one but you, and never have."

"You darling!"

These two words were uttered in the voice of Egstrom.

Peterson sat up in his coffin. Mrs. Peterson and Egstrom, not two yards away, were clasped in each other's arms.

At that instant the butler entered. The exposure was complete, witness included.

"Caught!" thundered the corpse, with bony finger pointed at the deceitful couple.

Mrs. Peterson, beholding the fearsome spectacle of her departed husband sitting up in his coffin and so justly denouncing her, fainted in dead earnest.

Egstrom was so scared that he let her

fall to the floor. Then he ran from the room and dashed, hatless, from the house.

Peterson crawled out of the coffin. Aided by the butler, he carried Mrs. Peterson to her room and sent for a physician—for truly she needed one.

When Peterson had regaled himself with a bath and a large steak with plenty of fried potatoes, he went back to the city and started divorce proceedings.

The trial, which promptly freed Peterson, created a sensation. Egstrom nearly collapsed on the witness stand. He is said to be traveling abroad for his health.

The divorced Mrs. Peterson is living in strict retirement.

It is reported that the shock of that "Grand Guignol" scene showing her departed husband sitting up in his coffin to accuse her has transformed her from a beauty into a nerve-racked old woman.

Our New Gun That Can Shoot 400 Mexicans a Minute--and Never Get Hot

THE machine gun is the mosting order as a bright, ingenious deadly weapon ever invented. American soldier would do. A machine gun is a device that fires rifle bullets continuously and automatically. All the soldier has to do is to pull a string or press a lever and then the bullets fly out. The man in control can play the stream of bullets over a field just as if they got in the way. The Mex-ican also have some machine guns but they are of a very inferior type to the American, and those half-civilized people are not capable of keeping the mechanism in good run.

The only imperfection in the absolute deadliness of the machine gun was its liability to jam occasionally. That has been almost entirely overcome in the Benet-Mercier gun. This gun weighs only twenty-nine pounds and needs no tripod like the older machine guns. In an emergency it might be rested on the shoulder of one man and fired by another. But under ordinary circumstances the soldier who fires it lies on his stomach on the ground, holding the breech, while the muzzle is upheld at the requisite elevation by a pair of steel prongs.



How One Man Can Manipulate the New Deadly Arm.



A Single Clip of 30 Cartridges Fired by the New Guns in Less Than Five Seconds.

Theoretically, the gun is capable of firing 600 bullets a minute—that is to say, at the rate of ten a second. In actual practice, however, it can discharge only 400 per minute, because some time is lost in replacing the spent clips with fresh ones. But 400 per minute means 24,000 man-killing projectiles per hour—at which rate the entire population of greater New York might, theoretically speaking, be wiped out by a single Benet-Mercier in a battle over eight days of twenty-four hours each.

The Benet-Mercier is an automatic gun. It is gas-operated. The gas from each powder charge, following the bullet as it goes through the barrel, passes through a hole in the bottom of the barrel into the chamber beneath the latter. Its expansion in the chamber presses back a piston with a coiled spring, the recoil of which ejects the empty cartridge case, feeds in a new cartridge, and fires it. Thus the process repeats itself with almost inconceivable rapidity, the bullets are discharged in a continuous stream like water from a hose.

Nothing to compare with the Benet-Mercier has been known up to the present time. Yet the War Department does not consider it beyond improvement. As a matter of fact, the perfect machine gun has not yet been developed. All such weapons give trouble now and then with enduring enormously high pressure from the powder charges.

Even now a competitive test is going on at the Government arsenal at Springfield, to see if any gun can prove itself better than the Benet-Mercier. In this competition are entered two machine rifles from England, one from Denmark and two from the United States. Our own War Department would rather have a foreign gun if it is superior to an American gun. We want the best possible weapon. The Benet-Mercier is made by a French company, though Benet, one of the inventors, is an American. Our government has secured the right to manufacture it at Springfield; and the Colt Company at Hartford, is equipped for turning it out.