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'Fresh from the gardens'

The Affair at Flower Acres

by CAROLYN WELLS

BEGIN HERE TODAY

The body of Douglas Raynor is found in the early evening on the floor of the sun room at Flower Acres, his Long Island home. Raynor has been shot through the heart. Standing over the dead man, pistol in hand, is Malcolm Finley, former sweetheart of Raynor's wife, Nancy. Eva Turner, Raynor's nurse, stands by the door with her hand on the light switch. In a moment Nancy appears, white-faced and terrified. Orville Kent, Nancy's brother, comes in from the south side of the room. And then Ezra Goddard, friend of Finley; Miss Mattie, Raynor's sister, and others, enter upon the scene. Detective Dobbins heads the police investigation. An autopsy reveals that Raynor also was being systematically poisoned with arsenic. Now comes Lionel Raynor, son of Douglas Raynor by an earlier marriage, with the announcement that his father's will bequeaths everything to him. Nancy, however, knows of another will that was witnessed by Grimshow Gannon, a hired man.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

"Well, Mrs. Raynor," Lionel said, "it rests between you and men, then, as to who inherits my father's estate. I have here the will that names me the heir. If you produce a later one, giving you the right to it, I have nothing more to say. But you must put up the goods."

"Why have you never been here before, Lionel?" Nan said. "Why have we never met?"

"Oh, to be frank, I rather resented the governor's marrying again, and I think I didn't care about seeing the new incumbent. Now, if we're to share the property, I suppose we'd better call a truce until the settlements can be made."

"Why a truce? Why not a permanent friendship—whatever the outcome of the settlement?"

Lionel looked at her accusingly. "I don't form friendships with people who—who tried to poison my father!"

Nan shrank as if from a blow, and Dobbins thought this a good time to thrust a question at her.

"That reminds me, Mrs. Raynor," he said, "is this book yours?" He held out the little volume."

"Why—where did you find it?" she asked, "where did you get that?"

"Hidden behind some other books on your bookshelf. Is it yours?"

A sudden and decided change came over Nancy Raynor.

"Yes," she said, raising her chin with a touch of obstinacy, "yes, it is mine."

"Why did you buy it?"

"Because—because I thought somebody was poisoning my husband and I wanted to learn the truth about it."

Dobbins almost laughed outright at this absurd story.

"You know, do you not, that he was being so poisoned—and that you are suspected of being the poisoner?"

"I know it," Nan sat bolt upright now, and her head, held high, was defiant in its pose. "Can you prove it?"

"I don't advise you to take that attitude, Mrs. Raynor," Dobbins said, not unkindly. "It won't get you anywhere."

"No, don't, Nan," said her brother. "You've got a hard row to hoe, but we're all back of you, and if you'll just tell the truth, it will all be smoothed out very soon."

"Smoothed out, indeed!" Miss Mattie bristled. "I insist on the fullest investigation of my brother's death. I can scarcely believe Nan is responsible for it, but I must know. Also, I want to know about this will business. Can't we send for Grim Gannon, and get at something?"

"Why not?" said Kent, and leaving the room he dispatched a servant to bring Gannon.

At last the big man lumbered slowly in. It was plain to be seen he was ill at ease in the presence of more refined people.

"Whatcha want o' me, Miss Raynor?" he asked, as he awkwardly took a chair.

"You can tell me what you know of my husband's will, Mr. Gannon. You witnessed it, I think."

"No, Mis' Raynor, I didn't." The cold light blue eyes of Grimshawe Gannon looked into her own, without any expression of concern or even interest in the matter.

"Why, Mr. Gannon, my husband told me that you did—you and Peters—the butler we had last year."

"Yes'm, I remember Peters—a good man but stupid. Well, him an' me, we never signed no will for Mr. Raynor—leastwise, not me, anyway."

"That man is telling a falsehood," said Nan quietly. "You did witness Mr. Raynor's signature to his will, Mr. Gannon, and you know where that will is."

Gannon gave a helpless look around the room, as if to say, "What can I say to that?"

But he only shrugged his great shoulders, and repeating his entire ignorance as to the existence or whereabouts of any will, he rose and lumbered off.

"Well," Dobbins said, "it begins to look serious. Can we get hold of the other witness, Mrs. Raynor?"

"I don't know," Nan said, looking thoughtful rather than confounded. "I can't understand it at all!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECRET PARCEL.

Malcolm Finley was not at all pleased with the role in which he found himself cast. He was a man of action, and he was obliged to keep quiet.

Most of all, he was desperately in in love with Nancy Raynor, and was not allowed to tell her so.

"Your time will come," Goddard told him. "If your love for her is the real thing, and if she reciprocates, no harm can come of waiting until a right and proper time to tell her of it. It would be unwise as well as untimely to tell her now—and, too, Finley, there's a big mystery to be solved by somebody. Between you and me, I don't think much of that detective—"

"But for that reason he's a good one to have on the case. He gets nowhere, he befogs all the issues—"

"And is that a good thing?"

"It most certainly is—for all concerned."

Finley went off and Goddard mused over what he had said.

Ezra Goddard carried a heavy heart. He felt that there was no solution to the mystery of the shooting, but to ascribe it either to Nan or Malcolm, and he couldn't bear to think it was either of those. Moreover, Nan had confessed to the ownership of the book on poisons, she had been secretly slipping tablets into her husband's teacup—what theory was there except the guilt of one or both?

Just now, matters seemed to be temporarily held up because of the absence of the will which Nan declared existed.

If this could be found and Nan inherited the estate, things would be quite different from the event of Lionel Raynor owning the place.

Goddard didn't like young Raynor—didn't like him at all.

Yet his opinions made small difference if the will Lionel possessed was the only one extant. For it was in every way, Goddard knew, a true and legal document—the only question being whether there had been at later one—or whether—this just occurred to Goddard, whether Douglas Raynor in a fit of anger had destroyed the will he had made in Nan's favor.

Goddard longed to send to New York for a famous detective he knew of, but, somehow he feared the things such a detective might discover.

On the theory of many people, Nancy Raynor and Malcolm Finley were glad to renew their old-time friendship and it had quickly ripened into love.

Both were of intense and passionate temperament. He could not deny the possibility that, goaded beyond endurance by her husband's cruelty and longing for the love and peace of Finley's protection, Nancy had let herself be driven to the point of poisoning the one that stood between her and happiness.

Also, it could be, that Finley, utterly exasperated at Raynor's petty cruelties to the woman he loved, had shot him down.

While he was pacing the east verandah and thinking these things over Malcolm Finley had at last found Nan alone.

Yet when he chanced to see her alone, on the west terrace, half hidden in the shadows of a great wistaria vine, he went to her at once and sat beside her.

"It's no use, dear," he said, gently; "I can't keep away. Now, Nancy, what do you want me to do?"

"What do I want you to do?" she whispered, half unconsciously repeating the words, and then a realization of her great trouble, her great loneliness surged over her, and she raised her eloquent, sad eyes to his, saying—"Help me — Malcolm — help me — somehow."

"Yes, dearest, yes, of course I will. It's hard. Nan—darling! you've no idea how hard it is—"

"Yes, I have, Malcolm"—she looked at him piteously—"but—oh, Malcolm, you don't know what I went through with that man! You don't know! It was like a living death—oh, I musn't talk like that! Forgive me, Malcolm—forgive me, dear—"

"Forgive you? Sweetheart! When I love you so I'm just holding myself together lest I break all bounds and tell you how I love you! I can't help it, Nan—I must take you in my arms—just once—please—my little girl—"

(To be continued.)

IT'S NO USE, DEAR. I CAN'T KEEP AWAY. NOW, NANCY, WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?"

Use Minard's for the rub down.

Is This "Empire Trade?"

Vancouver Sun (Lib.): A few days ago the United Kingdom Stores, Ltd., of London, called an apple shipper of Kakima, Washington, by long distance telephone and closed an apple deal amounting to $60,000 . . . There is no use of British Columbia sending up wails to high heaven because Washington won out on an English apple contract. If Washington can do this there is probably something wrong with British Columbia salesmanship. British Columbia would not mind losing business on a fair competitive basis. But what galls British Columbia is to lose this business with the English cry of "Trade within the Empire" ringing in our ears. . . . Is this "Empire trade?"

"Is there anything more pleasing than to turn the dial of a wireless set and listen to all the latest songs?" asks an essayist. Has he tried turning the dial the other way and shutting them off?—Punch.

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Sun God's Temple Found In Britain

First Century Ruin at Colchester Attracts Great Interest

London, Eng.—The discovery of a temple to Mithras, the Sun God of the Persians, at Colchester, reported recently, sheds a new light upon first century customs.

Some months ago a mysterious building was unearthed, which was believed to be a Roman tank. Some authorities thought it the site of a Roman tannery or fulling place.

Further clearances, however, have revealed a plan which, in the opinion of Professor Drexel, of the German Archaeological Institute, definitely establishes its identity.

In Mithraic temples of old, Mithras was worshipped by small, secret bodies. When the Christians attained power they made ferocious attacks upon such temples in England.

Two similar examples have been found, one imperfect at Housesteads, on Hadrian's Wall, and the other, since destroyed, at Burham, Kent.

In Germany there are others, and Colchester Mithraeum is declared to be exactly similar to the second Mithraeum in Germany.

The remains represent a chamber built to hold about 100 persons.

These temples were always built in hills or caves, and where no caves were available they were built underground, as in this instance.

The discovery is regarded by Essex archaeologists as of great interest and importance.

Keep Minard's in the Medicine chest.

The Health Budget

La Presse (Ind.): Our legislators at Ottawa have just voted a sum of fifty millions to defray the cost of the different Federal services which have the task of supervising the public health of the Dominion. This sum may not be as large as those devoted to the same purpose in other countries, but it seems to be large enough to give a reasonable measure of protection to the Canadian people. Furthermore, the success of the struggle against the illnesses themselves, depends very largely on the manner in which the health budget is administered. Every day this is proved to be the case by our experience.

The viewpoint of youth is generally neglected in the sports clubs that we have to-day, and this neglect has an unhappy result on our youth.—Mrs. H. P. Davison.

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A Scottish Problem

Spectator (London): Persons of Irish birth or Irish descent now form a very substantial section of the Scottish population, and, as most of them are Roman Catholics, attach supreme importance, has already excited much controversy and is by no means settled. It is hardly surprising that the Presbyterians should have drawn closer together in view of the marked growth of the Roman Catholic body and the emergence of religious issues in municipal elections. The reunited Church should be better able to cope with the situation than the two separate churches have been.

A face can cost as much in upkeep as a Rolls-Royce.—Aldous Huxley.

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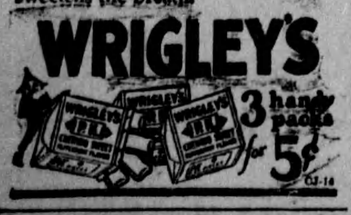

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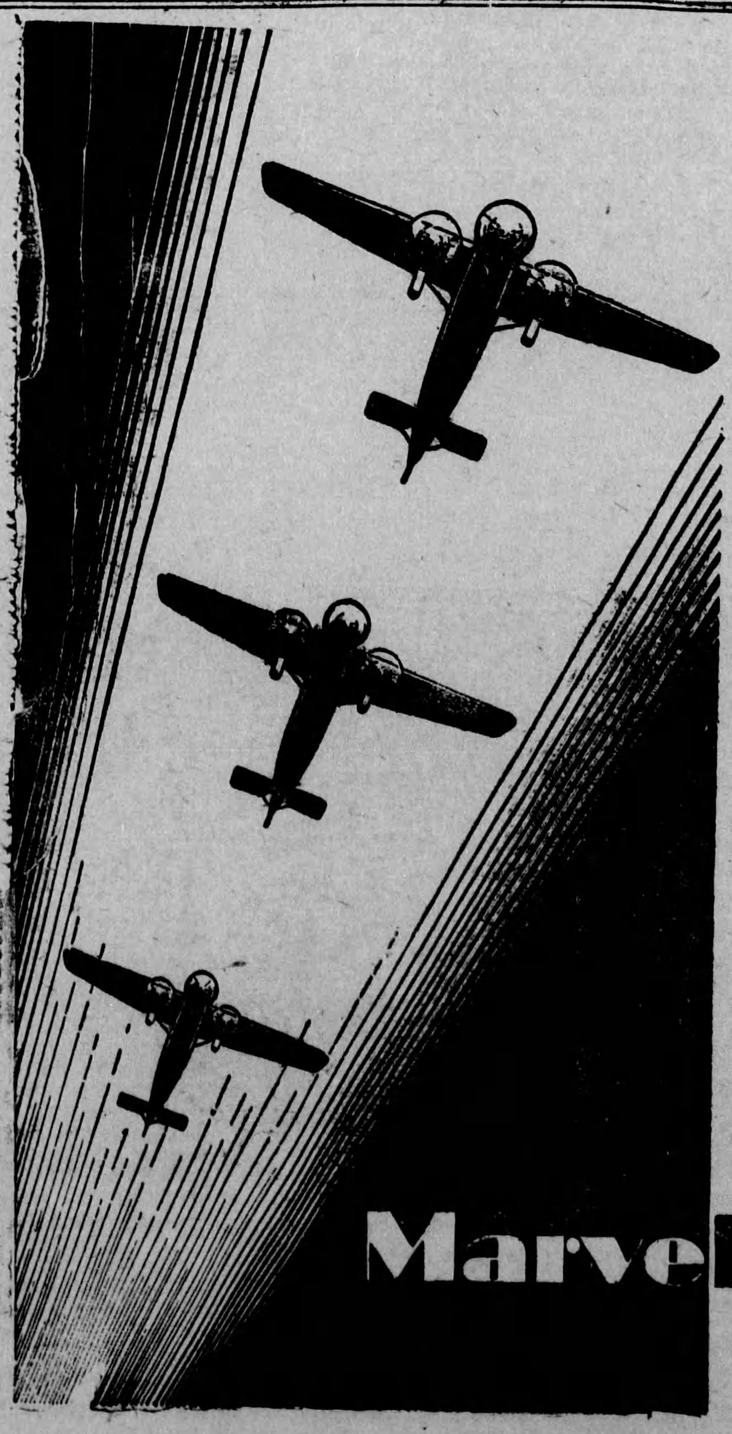

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