The MURDER at HAZELMOOR

by AGATHA CHRISTIE

SYNOPSIS.

On a bleak English winter's afternoon a party of neighbors, gathered at the home of Mrs. Willett and her daughter Violet, in the village of Sittaford, near Dartmoor, turn to table tipping for amusement and receive a message that Captain Trevelyan has been murdered.

CHAPTER I.—(Cont'd.)

"Look here," said Ronnie. He took his hands from the table. "I call this a rotten joke." His voice trembled.

"Turn up the lights," said Mr. Rycroft.

Major Burnaby rose and did so. The sudden glare revealed a company of pale uneasy faces.

Everyone looked at each other. Somehow—nobody quite knew what to say.

"Silly nonsense," said Mrs. Willett. "Nobody ought to—to make jokes like that."

"I wasn't shoving," said Ronnie, feeling unspoken criticism leveled at him. "I swear I wasn't."

"I can say the same," said Mr. Duke. "And you, Mr. Rycroft?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Rycroft warmly.

"You don't think I'd make a joke of that kind, do you?" growled Major Burnaby. "Rotten bad taste."

"Violet, dear—"

"I didn't, Mother. Indeed I didn't. I wouldn't do such a thing." The girl was almost tearful.

Everyone was embarrassed. A sudden blight had some over the cheerful party.

Major Burnaby pushed back his chair, went to the window and pulled aside the curtain. He stood there looking out with his back to the room.

"Twenty-five minutes past five," said Mr. Rycroft glancing up at the clock. He compared it with his own watch and somehow everyone felt that the action was significant in some way.

"Let me see," said Mrs. Willett with forced cheerfulness. "I think we'd better have cocktails."

The situation grew a little easier.

"Well," said Ronnie, raising his glass. "Here's how."

The others responded—all but the silent figure by the window.

"Major Burnaby. Here's your cocktail."

The Major roused himself with a start. He turned slowly.

"Thank you, Mrs. Willett. Not for me." He looked once more out into the night then came slowly back to the group by the fire. "Many thanks for a very pleasant time. Good night."

"You're not going?"

"Sorry, Mrs. Willett—but it's got to be done. If there were only a telephone."

"A telephone?"

"Yes—to tell you the truth—I'm—well, I'd like to be sure that Joe Trevelyan's all right. Silly superstition and all that—but there it is. Naturally, I don't believe in this tommy rot—but—"

"But you can't telephone from anywhere. There's not such a thing in Sittaford."

"That's just it. As I can't telephone, I'll have to go."

"Go—but you couldn't get a car down that road! Elmer wouldn't take his car out on such a night."

Elmer was the proprietor of the sole car in the place, an aged Ford, hired at a handsome price by those who wished to go into Exhampton.

"No, no—car's out of the question. My two legs will take me there, Mrs. Willett."

There was a chorus of protest.

"Oh! Major Burnaby—it's impossible. You said yourself it was going to snow."

"Not for an hour—perhaps longer. I'll get there, never fear."

Argument and entreaty had no more effect on Major Burnaby. He was an obstinate man. Once his mind was made up on any point, no power on earth could move him.

He had determined to walk to Exhampton and see for himself that all was well with his old friend. He wrapped himself up in his overcoat, lighted the hurricane lantern, and stepped out into the night.

"I'll just drop into my place for a mask," he said cheerily, "and then push straight on. Trevelyan will put me up for the night when I get there. Ridiculous fuss, I know. Everything sure to be all right. Don't worry, Mrs. Willett. Snow or no snow, I'll get there in a couple of hours. Good night."

He strode away. The others returned to the fire.

Rycroft had looked up at the sky.

"It is going to snow," he murmured to Mr. Duke. "And it will begin long before he gets to Exhampton. I—I hope he gets there all right."

Duke frowned.

"I know. I feel I ought to have gone with him. One of us ought to have done so."

"Most distressing," Mrs. Willett was saying. "Most distressing. Violet, I will not have that silly game played again. Poor Major Burnaby will probably plunge into a snowdrift—or if he doesn't he'll die of the cold and exposure. At his age, too. Very foolish of him to go off like that. Of course, Captain Trevelyan is perfectly all right."

Everyone echoed:

"Of course."

But even now they did not feel really too comfortable.

Supposing something had happened to Captain Trevelyan. . . Supposing!

CHAPTER II.

Two and a half hours later, just before eight o'clock, Major Burnaby, hurricane lantern in hand, his head dropped forward so as not to meet the blinding drive of the snow, stumbled up the path to the door of Hazelmoor, the small house tenanted by Captain Trevelyan.

The snow had begun to fall about an hour ago—great blinding flakes of it. Major Burnaby was gasping, emitting the loud sighing gasps of an utterly exhausted man. He was numbed with cold. He stamped his feet, blew, puffed, snorted and applied a numbed finger to the bell push.

The bell trilled shrilly.

Burnaby waited. After a pause of a few minutes, as nothing happened, he pushed the bell again.

Once more there was no stir of life.

Burnaby rang a third time. This time he kept his finger on the bell.

It trilled on and on—but there was still no sign of life in the house.

There was a knocker on the door. Major Burnaby seized it and worked it vigorously, producing a noise like thunder.

And still the little house remained silent as the dead.

The Major desisted. He stood for a moment as though perplexed—then he slowly went down the path and out at the gate, continuing on the road he had come towards Exhampton. A hundred yards brought him to the small police station.

He hesitated again, then finally made up his mind and entered.

Constable Graves, who knew the Major well, rose in astonishment.

"Well, I never, sir, fancy you being out on a night like this."

"Look here," said Burnaby curtly. "I've been ringing and knocking at the captain's house and I can't get any answer."

"Why, of course, it's Friday," said Graves who knew the habits of the two pretty well. "But you don't mean to say you've actually come down from Sittaford on a night like this? Surely the captain would never expect you."

"Whether he's expected me or not, I've come," said Burnaby testily. "And as I'm telling you, I can't get in. I've rung and knocked and nobody answers."

Some of his uneasiness seemed to communicate itself to the policeman.

"That's odd," he said, frowning.

"Of course it's odd," said Burnaby.

"Think he might have been taken bad?" The policeman's face brightened. "I'll try the telephone." It stood at his elbow. He took it up and gave the number.

But to the telephone, as to the front doorbell, Captain Trevelyan gave no reply.

"Looks as though he had been taken bad," said Graves as he replaced the receiver. "And all alone in the house, too. We'd best get hold of Dr. Warren and take him along with us."

Dr. Warren's house was almost next door to the police station. The doctor was just sitting down to dinner with his wife and was not best pleased at the summons. The snow was still falling.

"Damnable night," murmured the doctor. "Hope you haven't brought me out on a wild goose chase. Trevelyan's as strong as a horse. Never has anything the matter with him."

Burnaby did not reply.

Arriving at Hazelmoor once more, they again rang and knocked, but elicited no response.

The doctor then suggested going round the house to one of the back windows.

Easier to force than the door.

There was a side door which they tried on the way, but it too was locked, and presently they emerged on the snow-covered lawn that led up to the back windows. Suddenly Warren uttered an exclamation.

"The window of the study—it's open."

True enough, the window, a French one, was standing ajar. They quickened their steps. On a night like this, no one in his sense would open a window. There was a light in the room that streamed out in a thin yellow band.

The three men arrived simultaneously at the window—Burnaby was the first man to enter, the constable hard on his heels.

They both stopped dead inside and something like a muffled cry came from the ex-soldier. In another moment Warren was beside them, and saw what they had seen.

Captain Trelevyan lay on the floor, face downwards. His arms sprawled widely. The room was in confusion—drawers of the bureau pulled out, papers lying about the floor. The window beside them was splintered where it had been forced near the lock. Beside Captain Trevelyan wa a dark green baize tube about two inches in diameter.

Warren sprang forward. He knelt down by the prostrate figure.

One minute sufficed. He rose to his feet, his face pale.

(To be continued.)

Skerrymore: The Parallel

Here all is sunny, and when the truant gull
Skims the green level of the lawn, his wing
Dispetals roses; here the house is framed
Of kneaded brick and the plumed mountain pine,
Such clay as artists fashion and such wood
As the tree-climbing urchin breaks.
But there
Eternal granite hewn from the living isle
And dowelled with brute iron, rears a tower
That from its wet foundation to its crown
Of glittering glass, stands, in the sweep of winds,
Immovable, immortal, eminent.

—From "The Poems and Ballads of Robert Louis Stevenson."

Collecting Fad Proves Not For Wealthy Alone

New York.—It is possible to become a collector and assemble a collection without spending one penny, according to members of the collectors' group at the American Woman's Association. Ever since September a group of about 30 collectors have been meeting once each month at the association to compare their treasures and to relate the experiences they have had in gathering them.

And while one of them has priceless old lace and another has old furniture, both of them confess to having inherited their possessions so they have spent nothing. Another of the group has picked up shells at the seaside on various vacation trips. The mounted shells shown interested her fellow collectors quite as much as some of the costly articles owned by other members.

In the group there are women who spend all day in offices and utilize their collections as hobbies for their few hours of recreation. There are housewives who brighten the monotony of routine tasks by collecting Chinese textiles or old rings. And then there are women of independent income who can add to their collections as they like.

There is an artist who has collections of old rings, Chinese prints, textiles, shells, and Chinese costumes, a playwright whose interest is in lace and old jewelry, a librarian who owns priceless family lace, a genelogist who is just interested in collections but doesn't have one herself, a teacher who owns pewter, furniture, and Chinese textiles, and a whiter who buys old jewelry.

At each meeting one type of collection is chosen as the subject and owners bring what they have to show.

New Rail Coach Streamlined

A new sixty-foot streamlined railroad coach only a quarter the weight of a standard coach and seating forty-two persons is being tried out. A low gravity center adds safety and the body is of aluminum.

London Baby Clinic in 1816

It has just been discovered that in 1816 London had a baby clinic where mothers could take their children and receive advice.

Speaking much is a sign of vanity; for he that is lavish in words is a niggard in deed.—Sir Walter Raleigh.

Romance of Eighties Revived Again

Wedding Bells Ring Out for Lord St. Leven and Dowager Countess of Dartney

A 75-year-old peer and a 72-year-old peeress are honeymooning in Europe this month, after a secret wedding at the parish church of Newhaven, Sussex, a couple of weeks ago climaxed their half-century of romance, interrupted for 40 years when each married another person.

The wedding brought together Brigadier-General Lord St. Levan, owner of St. Michael's Mount, Cornwall, island estate on which a castle rears precipitously from the sea, and Julia, Dowager Countess of Dartrey.

Only 12 close relatives of the elderly couple were present at the wedding and a woman relative "gave away" the bride who is a grandmother. Even servants of the countess were surprised, they told a reporter who discovered, two days late, that the marriage had taken place.

The romance started when Lord St. Levan, then a Guards officer in his early 20's met Miss Julia Wombwell, daughter of the late Sir George Wombwell. For a considerable time the two were seen together at most smart functions and society wagged its head, prophesying wedding bells. They parted, however, and soon pretty Julia Wombwell married the Earl of Dartrey.

For 10 years Lord St. Levan remained a bachelor. He went to Egypt and had a distinguished military career. Then he married Lady Edith Edgecumbe, a daughter of the Earl of Mount Edgecumbe. They had two daughters. She died in 1931. Lord Dartney had died in 1920.

The Dowager Countess visited St. Michael's Mount. Uniformed oarsmen rowed her from the mainland. Later Lord St. Levan visited her in London. From reminiscences of their former association romance reformed.

They were married by special license of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Lord St. Levan's daughter, Hon. Hilaria St. Aubyn, was "best man." She handed over the ring at the appropriate moment.

Trousered Marlene Dietrich Jeered by Paris Crowd

Paris.—Marlene Dietrich, the screen star, followed by her husband and 17 trunks, arrived here from Hollywood and was jeered by a large crowd at St. Lazaire station.

The German actress was garbed in a chocolate polo coat, beret, and shoes, and a man's lounge suit, of pearl grey. She wore huge goggles.

Miss Dietrich attracted the biggest battery of photographers since Col. Charles A. Lindbergh flew the Atlantic. She was tired from the voyage over, she said, and proceeded to Versailles, a suburb.

Unearth Old Medal

Gananoque, Ont.—Workmen repairing pathways in the town park here dug up an old American medallion dated 1863. One side bore the inscription "The Union Must and Shall Be Preserved.—Jackson." On the reverse was the date, a statue of a man on horseback and the words "First in War and First in Peace."

Garbo Is Back!

The camera-man caught the exotic Garbo, as she waved farewell to passengers on the S.S. Annie Johnson from which she disembarked at San Diego. She wore a gray costume with polka-dot scarf.

Enjoy This Finer Quality

"SALADA" TEA

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"Fresh from the Gardens"

The Joys of Exploration

The joys of exploration are as varied as the numbers and characters of the explorers themselves, and the joys change during the lifetime of each person. I can remember the time when my greatest ambition was to be the first to step upon some tropical desert island, or to penetrate to where no white man's foot had ever trod. Then came the period of peripatetic journeys, of covering as much ground as possible in a given time. But I soon found that the island might be "desert" in very truth, with no return in scientific loot, and the thrill soon passed of encircling a sandy pit and seeing none but one's own footprints. I came to learn that worthwhile observations of birds and animals and insects were great in proportion to the smallness of territory covered. One might shoot a large parrot or catch a brilliant butterfly as one travelled, but to go slowly or to sit quietly was to invite the acquaintanceship of many rare and interesting creatures. To be a good naturalist one must be a stroller or a creeper, or better still a squatter in every sense of the word—never a traveller.

Then came joys within joys. For to be a squatter alone is only the beginning. We can divide our observations into static and dynamic. We can wait for hours and days for the glimpse of a bird, or for the courtship of a spider, or spend a whole night of the full moon in hopes of seeing a jaguar or a vapock, not from the point of view of a man, but from that of another jaguar or another water opossum. This method is of vital importance, and probably four-fifths of creative study of life histories must be gleaned in this manner. But there remains a residue of technique which excels all. . . . . It is the supreme achievement, the essence of intelligent deduction, which, when successful, brings to us a great feeling, never of conceit or egotism, but of gratitude, of awe, at having been permitted somewhat to enter into the very life feelings and intimate habits of wilderness folk.

A vocal bond is an unforgettable relationship. It is probably that every creature which has ears and can become audible has some sound to which it will react at once, and toward which it will immediately fly or run or creep or hop. With the miserable range of whistled or uttered tones which is our degenerate heritage we can rarely command or put this into practice. One of my first successes was the master sound of the chickadee. One could whistle chicka-dee-dee-dee-dee until Parus perfect and be rewarded by hardly a turn of the head. But in an unseasonable February thaw, when one felt spring and dreamed spring, but knew better than to say Spring, if we wetted our lips very carefully and holed down the finest whistle diaphragm, the resulting high, two-toned phoe-be! might bring a blackcap to our very face. My happiest refinement of this was when I learned to bring a jungle wren of the genus Leucolpia to my feet from a quarter mile distance across a tropical swamp, by a single, almost inhumanly high tone: and this is one of the wariest of wrens, most difficult to stalk. I derive a keen, childish joy from the knowledge that if today I enter a tropical jungle and send forth a high, thin penny-whistle of a sound on exactly E flat above middle C, every sloth within hearing will either answer or slowly and painfully begin to turn in my direction. A half-tone above or below will be the same as silence to these creatures, and I feel mentally the richer for knowing the utterly useless fact of the exact master sound of the sloths.—William Beebe, in "Nonsuch: Land of Water." (New York: Harcourt Brace.)

Forests

Turn, now, tired mind unto your rest,
Within your secret chamber lie,
Door shut, and windows curtained, lest
Footfall or moonbeam, stealing by,
Wake you, or night-wind sigh.

Now, Self, we are at peace—we twain;
The house is silent, except that—hark!—
Against its walls wells out again
That rapture in the empty dark;
Where, softly beaming, spark by spark.

The glow-worms stud the leaves with light;
And unseen flowers, refreshed with dew—
Jasmine, convolvulus, glimmering white,
The air with their still life endue,
And sweeten night for me and you.

Be mute all speech; and not of love
Talk we, nor call on hope, but be—
Calm as the constant stars above—
The friends of fragile memory,
Shared only now by you and me.

Thus hidden, thus silent, while the hours
From gloom to gloom their wings beat on,
Shall not a moment's peace be ours,
Till, faint with day, the east is wan,
And terrors of the dark are gone?

Nay—in the forests of the mind
Lurk beasts as fierce as those that tread
Earth's rock-strown wilds to night resigned.
There stars of heaven no radiance shed—
Bleak-eyed Remorse, Despair becowled in lead.
With dawn these ravening shapes will go—
Though One at watch will still remain.
Till knells the sunset hour, and lo!
The listening soul once more will know
Death and his pack are hot afield again.

—Walter De La Mare in the London Spectator.

Trucks Cross Africa After 3500-Mile Trek

Luxor, Egypt.—The broadest part of the African continent has been crossed.

Mr. and Mrs. T. A. Glover, Captain R. B. Andrew and Mr. S. Morgan have arrived here from Khartum after trekking two years with three trucks. During explorations in the northern half of the "Dark Continent," they negotiated the 3,500 miles from Dakkar, the farthest point west, to Ras Hafun, the most easterly point.

Jimmy: Ma's telin' all de neighbors you're going to buy a car in a few months.

Pop: Your Ma knows we are going to move in the Spring and the neighbors'll never see us again.

Mt. Everest Climbers Camp 21,000 Feet Above Sea

Calcutta, India. — Twenty-one thousand feet above sea level at a temperature of 20 degrees below zero, members of this year's Mount Everest climbing expedition established their third camp last week.

Braving the warnings of Tibetans that the gods of the mountains were infuriated at the recent airplane flights over their domain, four of the climbers at once set out to plot a route half way to the summit, ready for a final effort to scale the 29,000-foot peak.

This year's expedition is ahead of the normal climbing schedule. Tibetans friendly to the climbers urge them to await the most favorable conditions possible, believing that the mountain gods are watching every move and are ready now to wreak vengeance on anyone available for the affront of the airplane expedition.

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