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, turned to table tipping for amusement. They were startled when one of the "spirit" messages stated Captain Trevelyan had been murdered. Major Burnaby insisted upon tramping the six miles through snow, and found his friend dead on the floor, the room in disorder. He had been struck on the head with a green baize tube. The doors were locked, but a French window was open. Inspector Narracott discovered it had not been forced. It had been shut and then splintered from the outside to give it the appearance of forcing.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd.)

"It's a rum business," said Sergeant Pollock, his eye wandering to the littered floor. "All this burglary fake!"

"It's not that that strikes me as odd," said Narracott. "Under the circumstances it was probably the natural thing to do. No—what strikes me as odd is the window."

"The window, sir?"

"Yes. Why should the murderer go to the window? Assuming it was someone Trevelyan knew and admitted without question, why not go to the front door? To get round to this window from the road on a night like last night would have been a difficult and unpleasant proceeding with the snow lying as thick as it does. Yet, there must have been some reason."

They found Evans waiting in the dining room. He rose respectfully on their entrance.

He was a short thick-set man. He had very long arms and a habit of standing with his hands half clenched. He was clean shaven with small, rather piglike eyes, yet he had a look of cheerfulness and efficiency that redeemed his bulldog appearance.

Inspector Narracott mentally tabulated his impressions.

"Intelligent. Shrewd and practical. Looks rattled."

Then he spoke:

"You're Evans, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"Christian names?"

"Robert Henry."

"Ah! Now what do you know about this business?"

"Not a thing, sir. It's fair knocked me over. To think of the Capting being done in!"

"When did you last see your master?"

"Two o'clock I should say it was, sir. I cleared away the lunch things and laid the table here as you see for supper. The Capting, he told me as I needn't come back."

"What do you usually do?"

"As a general rule, I come back about seven for a couple of hours. Not always—sometimes the Capting would say as I needn't."

"Then you weren't surprised when he told you that yesterday you wouldn't be wanted again?"

"No, sir. I didn't come back the evening before either—on account of the weather. Very considerate gentleman, the Capting was, as long as you didn't try to shirk things. I knew him and his ways pretty well."

"What exactly did he say?"

"Well, he looked out of the window and he says, 'Not a hope of Burnaby today.' 'Shouldn't wonder,' he says, 'if Sittaford isn't cut off altogether. Don't remember such a winter since I was a boy.' That was his friend Major Burnaby over to Sittaford that he was referring to. Always comes on a Friday, he does, he and the Capting play chess and do acrostics. And on Tuesdays the Capting would go to Major Burnaby's. Very regular in his habits was the Capting. Then he said to me: 'You can go now, Evans, and you needn't come till tomorrow morning'."

"Apart from his reference to Major Burnaby, he didn't speak of expecting anyone that afternoon?"

"No, sir, not a word."

"There was nothing unusual or different in any way in his manner?"

"No, sir, not that I could see."

"Ah! Now I understand, Evans, that you have lately got married."

"Yes, sir. Mrs. Belling's daughter at the Three Crowns. Matter of two months ago, sir."

"And Captain Trevelyan was not overpleased about it."

A very faint grin appeared for a moment on Evans' face.

"Cut up rough about it, he did, the Capting. My Rebecca is a fine girl, sir, and a very good cook. And I hoped we might have been able to do for the Capting together, but he—he wouldn't hear of it. Said he wouldn't have women servants about his house. In fact, sir, things were rather at a deadlock when this South African lady came along and wanted to take Sittaford House for the winter. The Captain he rented this place, I came in to do for him every day, and I don't mind telling you, sir, that I had been hoping that by the end of the winter the Capting would have come round to the idea; and that me and Rebecca would go back to Sittaford with him. Why, he would never even know she was in the house. She would keep to the kitchen, and she would manage so that he would never meet her on the stairs."

"Have you any idea what lay behind Captain Trevelyan's dislike of women?"

"Nothing to it, sir. Just an 'abit, sir, that's all. I have seen many a gentleman like it before. If you ask me, it's nothing more or less than shyness. Some young lady or other gives them a snub when they are young—and they gets the 'abit."

"Captain Trevelyan was not married?"

"No, indeed, sir."

"What relations had he? Do you know?"

"I believe he had a sister living at Exeter, sir, and I think I have heard him mention a nephew or nephews."

"None of them ever came to see him?"

'No, sir. I think he quarrelled with his sister at Exeter."

"Do you know her name?"

"Gardner, I think, sir, but I wouldn't be sure."

"You don't know her address?"

"I'm afraid I don't, sir."

"Well, doubtless we shall come across that in looking through Captain Trevelyan's papers. Now, Evans, what were you yourself doing from four o'clock onwards yesterday afternoon?"

"I was at home, sir."

"Where's home?"

"Just round the corner, sir, 85 Fore Street."

"You didn't go out at all?"

"Not likely, sir. Why, the snow was coming down a fair treat."

"Yes, yes. Is there anyone who can support your statement?"

"Beg pardon, sir."

"Is there anyone who knows that you were at home during that time?"

"My wife, sir."

"She and you were alone in the house?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, well, I have no doubt that's all right. That will be all for the present, Evans."

The ex-sailor hesitated. He shifted from one foot to the other.

"Anything I can do here, sir—in the way of tidying up?"

"No—the whole place is to be left exactly as it is for the present."

"I see."

"You had better wait, though, until I have had a look around," said Narracott, "in case there might be any question I want to ask you."

Inspector Narracott transferred his gaze from Evans to the room.

The interview had taken place in the dining room. On the table an evening meal was set out. A cold tongue, pickles, a Stilton cheese and biscuits, and on a gas ring by the fire a saucepan containing soup. On the sideboard was a tantalus, a soda water siphon, and two bottles of beer. There was also an immense array of silver cups and with them—a rather incongruous item, three very new looking novels.

Inspector Narracott examined one or two of the cups and read the inscriptions on them.

"Bit of a sportsman, Captain Trevelyan," he observed.

"Yes, indeed, sir," said Evans. "Been an athlete all his life, he had."

Inspector Narracott read the titles of the novels.

"Love Turns the Key," "The Merry Men of Lincoln," "Love's Prisoner."

"H'm," he remarked. "The Captain's taste in literature seems somewhat incongruous."

"Oh! that, sir." Evans laughed. "That's not for reading, sir. That's the prizes he won in these Railway Pictures Names Competitions. Ten solutions the Capting sent in under different names, including mine, because he said 85 Fore Street was a likely address to give a prize to! The commoner your name and address the more likely you were to get a prize in the Capting's opinion. And sure enough a prize I got—but not the £2,000, only three new novels—and the kind of novels, in my opinion, that no one would ever pay money for in a shop."

Narracott smiled, then again mentioning that Evans was to wait, he proceeded on his tour of inspection.

There was a large kind of cupboard in one corner of the room. It was almost a small room in itself. Here, packed in unceremoniously, were two pairs of skis, a pair of sculls, mounted, ten or twelve hippopotamus tusks, rods and lines and various fishing tackle including a book of flies, a bag of golf clubs, a tennis racket, an elephant's foot, stuffed and mounted, and a tiger skin. It was clear that, when Captain Trevelyan had let Sittaford House furnished, he hd removed his most precious possessions distrustful of female influence.

"Funny idea—to bring all this with him," said the inspector. "The house was let for only a few months, wasn't it? Surely these things could have been locked up at Sittaford House?"

For the second time in the course of the interview, Evans grinned.

"That would have been much the easiest way of doing it," he agreed. "Not that there are many cupboards at Sittaford House. The architect and the Capting planned it together, and it takes a female to understand the value of cupboard room. Still, as you say, sir, that would have been the common sense thing to do. Carting them down here was a job—I should say it was a job! But there, the Capting couldn't bear the idea of anyone messing around with his things. So take them along we did, and as I say, it was a job, and came expensive too. But there, those things of the Capting's was like his children."

(To be continued.)

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ISSUE No. 24—'33

Do Your Sleeping Before Midnight

Proverb "One Hour's Sleep Before Midnight Worth Two Hours' Afterward" is Upheld

The proverb that "one hour's sleep before midnight is worth two hours' afteward," usually is ridiculed by physicians.

A recent German investigation tends, however, to cast doubt on this medical opinion and to confirm the ancient proverb. Says Dr. E. E. Free, in his Week's Science (New York):

Dr. Theodor Stockmann, principal of a school in Duisburg, noticed that one of his pupils was falling behind in his school work, and was becoming more and more lazy and sleepy.

Inquiring into this young man's sleep habits, Dr. Stockmann found that he was studying late at night and sleeping late in the morning. Change of this habit so that the pupil slept before midnight and woke very early in the morning to study caused remarkable improvement in school work and in health.

Dr. Stockmann then tested the same plan on seventeen other pupils, averaging about nineteen years old. All turned out to be in better health and to do better school work when they habitually got four or five hours' sleep before midnight and got up at three or four o'clock in the morning to do their studying.

Two pupils who worked part of the day also found themselves in better health and more successful in their studies when they went to bed immediately after supper and did their school work between midnight and dawn. His observations also suggest, Dr. Stockmann reports to the German medical profession, that less than eight hours' sleep may be enough, at least for young people, provided all of it is obtained before midnight.

Colour

Tall white cliffs, an emerald hill,
A red flag flying free,
Swift grey birds which roam at will
And brown boats on the sea.

Crimson rays on waters green
From opal sky emerge;
Foam of pearl and silver sheen
The yellow sands submerge.

Tawny shades on distant blue
From canvas russet-brown;
Wavelets flected with orange hue,
Each crest a golden crown.

Dull black sails—which loom afar.
As giant moths at night;
Clear and cold the Vesper Star
Now shines with solemn light.

—Marcia Knight, in "Milestones".

The longer you live, if you live right, the less you will think of yourself.

London's Phone Exchange Links Whole World

In 1876 Alexander Graham Bell patented an apparatus for the transmission of speech, the precursor of our modern telephone. In 1891 the first oversea cable was laid between London and Paris, containing only two circuits. Now it is possible for the human voice to be communicated from the heart of the Empire to every other country of the world except to China and Japan. This was the statement of Sir Kingsley Wood, British Postmaster-General, recently at the formal opening in London by the Lord Mayor at a new telephone exchange through whose switchboard, with 32,000,000 subscribers—there being about 34,000,000 telephones in the world—the Empire is linked together. This new building, whose opening the Prince of Wales honored with his presence, marks the development in twenty-one years of the radio-telephone, for it is just that long ago since the Government took over the telephone system—now part of the efficient British Post Office. The system handles about 16,000,000 calls a year, about ten calls a day being to Canada. Various devices have been introduced to build up the voice of the subscriber, which tends to fade in transmission. The new London Exchange indicates the remarkable development that has taken place in telephony during recent years.—Toronto Mail and Empire.

Use of Color in Home Decoration Increasing

There has been a remarkable increase in the use of color by Canadians for the decoration and preservation of every conceivable surface this year. A few years ago gray was predominant, but that cold repellant shade is rarely a part of to-day's color choice.

This change is a very welcome one, as color not only enables one to give practical expression of good taste but the fact is that an attractive combination of color greatly enhances an atmosphere which encourages ambition—stimulates a desire for progress and contributes to the happiness of one's self and neighbors.

The colors most in demand this spring on exteriors are light greens, buff and browns. Summer resorts are inclining to brighter shades such as Devil Red for roofs, bright greens, cream and light browns with white used to some extent on sash or trim.

The depression has taught most people that a little attention to the home pays handsome dividends in personal health, contentment and pleasure.

Captain "Sees" Entire Ship With New Fire Detectors

London.—A new invention to reduce the risk of fire at sea, which makes all the ship "visible" to the captain, is creating much interest in shipping circles here.

Air ducts, or channels, are fitted to every vulnerable point of the ship. At the end of each channel is a small detector and extinguisher resembling a telephone mouthpiece. A rise above a specified temperature or a wisp of smoke causes the detector to set off an alarm.

Once the alarm is in action carbon dioxide automatically is pumped through the air channels and begins to smother the flames.

Jackie Cooper, 10-year-old film star, went to court and took a cut of $76,000 off his salary for the next two years and never batted an eyelash. Most people might feel inclined to be sorry about Jackie, but he will continue to draw $1,300 per week, the court merely having eliminated the graduated scale of increase provided in the original contract.—St. Catharines Standard.

Indo-American Wedding

Kumar Jehan Seesodia-Warliker, Indian prince, and the former Mrs. Katharine Winterbotham, whom he married in Chicago, recently. They plan to go to London, Eng., where the prince hopes to enter parliament as Indian representative.

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Recent Events From Overseas

Women Favor Flying

Women of Europe are taking to air travel. In the last few months the proportion of women flying in air liners on the cross-Channel and provincial services has risen from approximately 50 per cent. to more than 75 per cent. Several times recently all the passengers in 'planes arriving at Croydon, England, have been women.

Grand Old Man Dies

James Stewart, known as the Grand Old Man of Tientsin, died recently in the Chinese city. He was an engineer and joined the Chinese Imperial Service 66 years ago. He built the first steamboat for the late Empress of China, and was governor of the Arsenal of Tientsin in 1900 at the time of the Boxer rebellion. Stewart was born in Scotland 89 years ago.

Train Passes Over Baby

Although an engine and two cars passed over it, an 18-months-old baby at Zurawnica, Poland, is still alive. The tot was playing on the track when a passenger train arrived. The engineer applied the brakes, but could not stop the train in time. The child was found between the wheels unhurt.

Shrine in Station

Johannesburg, South Africa. — The new railway station of this city is probably the only station in the British Empire, outside of India, equipped with a shrine for the "faithful."

An inner room has a praying mat on the floor and a shower bath has been installed so that the "faithful" who enters may perform his ablutions before he enters to pray.

As a result "Allah Ho Akbar" (God of Great) is now intoned in the station before the pious Muslim leaves on a train journey.

Dog Captures Bird

A Sydney policeman's Alsatian dog watched the man next door clean out his canary cage. Suddenly the bird escaped, flew some yards, and perched on a fence. The dog dashed after it, leaped into the air, and seized the bird. He trotted back with only the tail of the canary showing from his mouth, and returned the bird unharmed to its owner.

Night Club Unlucky

London, Eng.—The "Ambassador," designed to be the most luxurious and exclusive night club in London has been broken up under the auctioneer's hammer.

By order of the court, its furniture and fittings and its wine cellar were sold under distress for rent and rates.

The club should have been a great success, but it never was, Mysterious ill-luck dogged it.

Since 1927 the loss is said to be £159,000. Mr. Maundy Gregory was always finding money for its assistance. He placed nearly £170,000 at its disposal.

The membership was reputed to number 11,000, although it is doubtful if many of these members ever paid subscriptions. A large number of them were "honorary." Often at lunch or dinner time the restaurant, complete with a full staff, had no patrons.

The club was originally established as a "diplomatic and social centre," and in its diary for 1930 the following were given as members of the governing committee: Lord Southborough, Major-General J. E. B. Seely, Dudley Ward, Colonel H. W. Burton, R. H. Carruthers.

A special telephone line, the number of which was not published, was reserved exclusively for the benefit of members of the House of Commons.

"Paying the Piper"

London, Eng.—The phrase "Paying the piper while others call the tune" is a colloquialism dating back to the beginnings of the Pied Piper of Hamelin in the thirteenth century.

It means to bear the expense or loss of something from which others derive the benefit either voluntarily or by compulsion.

Congreve used the phrase in a modified form in his play "Love for Love" in 1695.

It was used by Flatman in "Heraclitus Rideus" in 1681 in its present form.

But an earlier use of the phrase can be traced to Moliere, who spoke of "Payng the piper for others to dance" in his play "La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas."

Duchess Adopts Donkey

London, Eng.—"Ned," an Irish donkey, is a guest of the Duchess of Portland at Welbeck Abbey, her country home near Worksop. The Duchess is befriending the donkey, which was sent to London from Dublin as a practical joke on a trainer who had ordered a racehorse, and instead of it being consigned to ignoble work such as pulling a coster's barrow it travelled from London in a palatial horse box.

When "Ned" left Dublin all the carriage fees had been paid, and the trainer to whom the donkey was sent told the London, Midland and Scottish Railway officials that they could do what they liked with him. The Duchess of Portland has befriended many derelict horses and donkeys, and in 1930 it was stated that she had given part of her fine stables at Welbeck Abbey for their use.

Heavy Insurance

London, Eng.—The world's largest life insurance policy is held by Mr. Pierre S. Dupont, of Wilmington, Delaware, who is insured for £1,400,000.

Lord in Bankruptcy

London, Eng.—At Bankruptcy Buildings, London, recently, the first meeting of creditors was held under a receiving order made against Lord Richard Plantagenet Nevill. It was stated that unsecured liabilities were estimated at £2,200.

On behalf of Lord Nevill, it was said that an offer was submitted by his brother, the Marquis of Abergavenny, to pay the moneylending creditors the full amount of the principal debts, together with 10 per cent. interest, but that offer had not been unanimously accepted.

It was now intended to submit an offer for a composition of ten shillings in the pound, plus five per cent. interest on all debts.

China's Place in the World

Hong Kong Press: China has now an immense opportunity to consolidate the friendship and respect of the world, gained during the past eighteen months. This factor of genuine good will is no small one in the situation. No one will say that self-interest and the desire to preserve the balance of power in the Far East are absent from Western minds, in their wish to see China strengthened. On the other hand, the fact of China's awakening national sense is accepted. The old system of relations between China and the Manchu dynasty and the European residents in the country is passing. The wish is not to preserve China of the ancient days, and to maintain a half-contact through intermediaries, but to assist in China's reorganization as a modern power, modelled on her own lines but strong, united and well governed. That is the true defence against both Japan and Russia, and the sure method of restoring Manchuria to her old allegiance.

The U.S. navy has developed an anchor chain made of nickel-chromium steel.

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