

Murder at Bridge

By ANNE AUSTIN.

SYNOPSIS.

Special Investigator Dundee, having dinner with Penny Crain the Sunday after Juanita Seclim is murdered at bridge, tells her the latest findings: Suspicion centres heavily on Ralph Hammond, in love with Nita, who came to Nita's house the morning of the murder to estimate the cost of remodeling the attic and found in the attic bedroom traces of Dexter Sprague's occupancy there.

Lydia, the maid, who was horribly burned by Nita and to whom Nita left all her money, including a mysterious \$10,000 which Dundee thinks is black mail, is practically cleared of suspicion. The evidence against Ralph has been made public as yet, as the theory is that a New York gunman killed her. Penny goes to answer the telephone and returns, horrified, and tells Dundee that Ralph has just called and he doesn't even know Nita is dead.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Of course I recognized his voice instantly when he said, 'That you, Penny?' and it's a wonder to me I didn't scream," said Penny Crain, fighting her way up through dazed bewilderment to explain in detail, in answer to Dundee's peering questions. "I said, 'Of course, Ralph. . . Where have you been?' . . . Where have you been?"

"That's exactly how he talked, Bonnie Dundee! Exactly! Oh, don't you see he couldn't know that Nita is dead?"

"Did you ask him where he was?" Dundee asked finally.

"No, I just told him to come on over, and he said I could depend on it that he wouldn't waste any time. . . Oh, Bonnie! What shall we do?"

"Listen, Penny!" Dundee urged rapidly. "You must realize that I've got to see and hear, but I don't want Ralph Hammond to see me until after he's had a talk with you. Will you let me eavesdrop behind these portieres? . . . I know it's a beastly thing to do, but—"

Penny agreed at last, and within 10 minutes after that amazing telephone call Dundee, from behind the portieres that separated the dining and living rooms, heard Penny greeting her visitor in the little foyer. She had played fair, had not gone out into the hall to whisper a warning—if any warning was needed.

He had seen Ralph Hammond enter the dining room of the Stuart House the day before, in company with Clive Hammond and Polly Beale, when the three had been strangers to him; but Dundee told himself now that he would hardly have recognized the young man whom Penny was preceding into her living room. The Ralph Hammond of Saturday had had a white drawn face and sick eyes. But this boy. . .

Like his older brother, Clive, Ralph Hammond had dark red, curling hair. But unlike his brother's, his eyes were wide, candid hazel—the green iris thickly flecked with brown. A little shorter than Clive, a trifle more slender. But that which held the detective's eyes was something less tangible but at once more evident than superlative masculine good looks. It was a sort of shy joyousness and buoyance, which flushed the tan of his cheeks, sang in his voice, made his eyes almost unbearably bright.

Before Penny Crain, very pale and quiet, could sink into the chair she was groping toward, Ralph Hammond

was at her side, or arm going out to encircle her shoulders.

"Don't look like that, Penny," Dundee heard him plead, his voice suddenly humble. "You're every right to be sore at me, honey, but please don't be. I know I've been an awful cad these last few weeks, but I'm myself again. I'm cured now, Penny."

"Wait, Ralph!" Penny protested faintly, holding back as he would have hugged her hard against his breast. "What about Nita?"

Dundee saw the young man's face go darkly red, but heard his boyish voice answer almost steadily: "I hoped you'd understand without making me put it into words, honey. . . I'm cured of Nita. I can't express it any other way except to say I was sick, and now I'm cured."

"You mean—Penny faltered, but with a swift, imploring glance toward Dundee—"you don't love Nita any more? You can't deny you were terribly in love with her, Ralph. Lois told me last night that Nita had told her in strictest confidence that she had promised to marry you, just Thursday night."

"The boy's face was very pale as he dropped his hands from Penny's shoulders, but Dundee was not troubling to spy for the moment. He was too impatient at Penny for having withheld from him the vital fact of Nita's engagement to Ralph Hammond.

"That's true, Penny," Ralph was saying dully. "You've a right to know, because I'm asking you to marry me now. . . I did propose to Nita again Thursday night, and she did accept me. I confess now I was wild with happiness."

"Why did she refuse you before?" Penny cut in. "Was it because she wasn't sure she was in love with you?"

"You're making it awfully hard for me, honey," the boy protested, then admitted humbly. "Of course you want to know, and you should know. . . No, she said all along, almost from the first, that she loved more than I could love her, but that there were reasons. . . Two reasons, she always said, and once I asked her jealously if they were both men, but she looked so startled and then laughed so queerly that I didn't ask again. . . Then I thought it might be because I was younger than she was. And once I got cold-sick because I thought she might still be married, and she said her husband was married again, and I wasn't to ask questions or worry about him."

"But she did accept you Thursday night?" Penny persisted.

"Yes," the boy admitted, his face darkly flushed again. "This is awfully hard, honey, but I'll tell you once for all and get it over with. . . I took her to dinner. We drove to Burnsville because she said she was sick of Hamilton. When we were driving back she suddenly became very queer—reckless, defiant. . . And she asked me if I still wanted to marry her, and I said I did. I asked her right then to say when, and she said she'd marry me June first, but she added that she'd marry me June first if she lived to see the day."

"Oh!" Penny gasped, then, controlling her horror, she asked with what sounded like real curiosity, "Then what happened, Ralph? Why do you propose to her on Thursday and to me on Sunday?"

"Can't we forget it, honey? . . . You love me a little, don't you? Can't you take my word for it that I'm cured now—forever?"

"How can I know you're really cured, if I don't know what cured you?" Penny's faltering voice asked.

"I suppose you're right," the boy admitted miserably. "There's no need to ask you not to tell anyone else. Although I don't want to see her again ever—Why, Penny, I wouldn't even tell Polly and Clive yesterday, after it happened, though Polly guessed and went upstairs. . . I tried to keep her back."

"I don't quite understand, Ralph," Penny interrupted. "You mean something happened when you were at Nita's house yesterday morning?"

"Yes, Judge Marshall had promised Nita to have the unfinished half of the story turned into a maid's bedroom and bath and a guest bedroom and bath. Clive let me go to make the estimates. Of course I was glad of the chance to see Nita again—I hadn't been with her since Thursday night. But she had to take Lydia in for a dentist's appointment, and they left me alone in the house. I had to go into the finished half to make some measurements, and in the bedroom I found—oh, God!" he groaned, and pressed a fist against his trembling mouth.

"You found that Dexter Sprague was staying there, was using the bedroom that used to be mine—didn't you?" Penny helped him at last.

"How did you know?" The boy stared at the girl blankly for a moment. "I suppose it was common gossip that Nita and Sprague were lovers and I was the only one she fooled! . . . To think all of you would stand by and let me marry her—a cheap little gold-digger from Broadway, living with a cheap four-flusher she couldn't get along without and had to send for—"

"Did you want to kill her, Ralph?" Penny whispered hoarsely, touching one of his knotted fists with a trembling hand.

"Kill her? . . . Good Lord, no!" the boy flung at her violently. "I'm not such an ass as that! Polly had so little sense as to think I'd want to kill Nita and Sprague both. She couldn't see, and neither could Clive, that all I wanted was to get away from everybody and get so drunk I could forget what a fool I'd been—"

"What did you do, Ralph?" Penny asked urgently.

"Why, I got drunk, of course," the boy answered, as if surprised at her persistence. "Darling, you wouldn't believe me if I told you how much I got Scotch it took to put me under, but that filthy bootlegging hotel clerk would have charged me double if he had known how much good it would do me."

"What?" Penny snatched at the vital word. "Where did you go to get drunk, Ralph?"

"After I shook Clive—Polly went on to Nita's bridge party. I wandered around till I came to the Railroad Men's Hotel, down on State street, you know, the other side of the tracks. It's a miserable dump, but I sort of hankered for a place to hide in that was as miserable and cheap as I felt."

"Did you register under your own name?"

"No, I registered under my first two names—Ralph Edwards. And the clerk turned out to be a bootlegger. . . Well, when I woke up about 11 this morning I wasn't sick and headachy, though I'd drunk enough to put me out for a week. . . Penny, I woke up feeling—well, I felt light and new and—clean. . . All washed-up! At first I thought my heart was empty—it felt so free of pain. But as I lay there I found my heart wasn't empty at all. It was brimming full of love."

But before I rang you I wrote Nita a special delivery note, telling her it was all off. I had to be free actually, before I could ask you. . . You will marry me, won't you, Penny honey?"

Penelope rain remained rigid for a moment, then very slowly she laid both her hands on his head.

"Yes, I'll marry you, Ralph! . . . You may come in now, Mr. Dundee!" (To be continued.)

The Shoppers

Along the crowded street they come and go
Under the holly boughs and cedar wreaths;
Surely some mighty truth has made it so,
And wrought this season when the tired world breathes—
A richer air, and human hearts are moved
Beyond the joys and griefs of every day
To old familiar things, the long beloved
And precious things that living thrusters away.

No selfish urge has set the hurrying feet
Of Christmas shoppers where the thousands tread
Their is an errand tremulous and sweet,
Stirred by the song of angels overhead:

And laden arms bear gifts that strangely blur
To spice and gold and frankincense and myrrh.
—Minnie Hite Moody

Thrifty
A Scotsman was flying from Crocydon to Switzerland, and the pilot, looking round, noticed that his passenger appeared to be very ill. His face was red, and he was perspiring freely.

"So when they stopped at Paris the pilot suggested that the Scotsman should break his journey and see a doctor.

The Scotsman shook his head.

"It's a right!" he exclaimed. "There's nothin' rang wi' me."

"But, man alive, you're looking terrible!" expostulated the pilot. "There's something the matter with you."

"Well, it's like this," explained the Scotsman. "When I was comin' to Crocydon by your car I read a notice which said extra luggage was three pence a pound. I wasn't goin' to pay a' that, so I slipped on ma extra clothes."

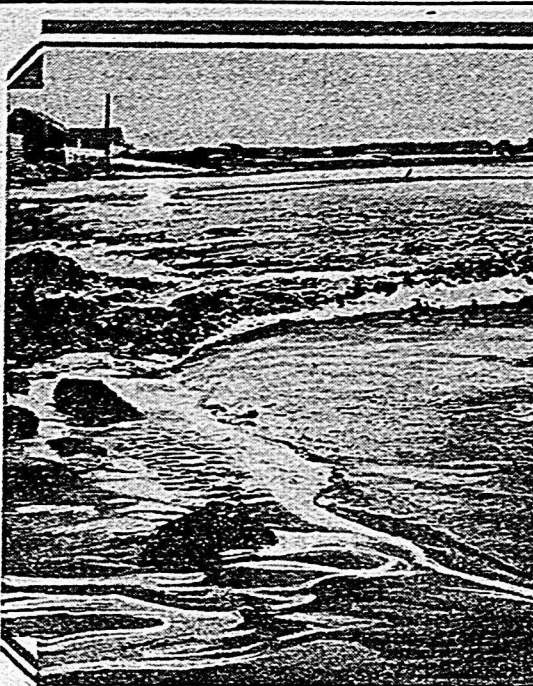
And he opened his overcoat.

Underneath was another overcoat. He also had on two jackets, two waistcoats and three pairs of trousers!

An old Scotsman bought a wireless set, and his friend went round a short time afterwards to inquire how he liked it. "Well," said Donald, "it's a right to listen to, but them bulbs are nae good to read by."

"What kind of a woman is Wilson's wife?" "The kind that talks on and on and on about things that leave her speechless."

Do You Know?



That the tides of the Bay of Fundy are among the highest in the world, rising to 51 feet in the Petitcodiac River and running at the rate of from one to 1 1/2 miles per hour? At Moncton, New Brunswick, on the Petitcodiac River these tides are preceded by a bore, or solid wall of water which rolls in suddenly with a roar that can be heard at a considerable distance. The photograph shows the bore nearing Moncton.

Now You Know

A well-dressed, sane-looking man of forty-five or so was driving along Piccadilly in a bright roadster with the top down when suddenly he removed his hat, a new crown felt, and threw it away.

In case anybody saw this extraordinary gesture, we can explain how it happened.

The man, inclined to absent-mindedness, has two cars, the other one being a sedan. He thought he was in the sedan and had tossed his hat over his shoulder on to the back seat.

Counted Out

A local footballer, noted for his swagger, had won a large sum on a football coupon bet—one home and four away teams—and was doing his usual Saturday night brag at the public house.

Next morning he went to feed his five pullets—but to his consternation four were missing. On the poultry-house door, chalked in large letters, was "1 Home, 4 Away."



"It didn't work."
"What didn't?"
"My scheme for playing the stock market."

Made to Measure

At a motor show a man and woman were discussing a popular four-seater of the baby type, the woman appearing to lay down the law and the man nodding without any enthusiasm.

Suddenly he drew a tape from his pocket. He measured the door of the car and then turned to the woman.

"All right, Mary," he said. "Have it your own way! But that bus has either got to have larger doors or I've got to have a smaller mother-in-law."

"We need fewer conferences and more decisions, fewer resolutions and more actions."—Benito Mussolini.

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What's Wrong Puzzle



There are from fifteen to twenty mistakes in each of the cartoons which will appear weekly on this page. See if you can find them and then compare with list which will be published next week.

- Words "dogs," "cats" and "allowed" incorrect on sign.
- One handle missing from the wash boiler.
- Word "cigarettes" misspelled.
- Potatoes are not sold by the quart.
- Word "Cider" misspelled.
- Dog should not be in grocery.
- Dollar sign not in correct place on shoes.
- Shoes are not mates.
- Pear sign is not on pears.
- Bananas growing upside down on stalk.
- Mice do not come out where there are people.
- Man has his hat on cross-wise.
- Ducks are not kept on the shelves in a grocery.
- Wheels do not match on small boy's wagon.
- Small boy has nothing by which to pull his wagon.
- Numbers on the clock are back wards.

The Fine Art Of Letting Go

By LEWIS GASTON LEARY in Scribner's Magazine

My wife and I are again passing through that difficult period of family life when dinner-table conversation with a high-school son resembles the cross-examination of a reluctant witness by opposing counsel. On the average it takes four courteous inquiries, plus two maternal pleadings and one stern paternal admonition, to drag out of him a sketchy bit of information about some inconsequential happening of the day.

While I must confess that this "none of your business" attitude toward a natural interest in the doings of our offspring sometimes irritates me, it does not worry me at all; for I realize that the unnecessary secretiveness of adolescence, and even its deliberately provocative challenges of parental authority, are by-products of an entirely wholesome instinct, the absence of which in any of my children would seriously disturb my peace of mind.

If the adult years are to be successful and happy, the adolescent period must be marked by the attainment of an emotional independence, a new sense of individualism, an eagerness of existence which is self-conscious and self-sustaining and not any longer rooted in the parental home. Therefore all normal young people are egotistical; for the fuller realization of the I in them is a vitally necessary accomplishment of the transition stage between childhood and maturity.

That annoying son of mine is too busy to analyze his present attitude, beyond concluding that he is old enough now to live his own life, make his own decisions, have his own private thoughts, and in general be treated like a man; but what he is really trying to do is to teach his individuality from us, so that instead of being "our son, William" he will be—himself.

"When the time comes, thou shalt let thy children go." We children growing away from their dependence on us. Yet there comes a time when parents must do just that—for their children's sake.

With any relaxing of discipline, there is, of course, a chance that the children—who, after all, are not nearly so competent to deal with life's problems as they think they are—may come to harm. There is always the chance that any splendid adventure, like growing up, may go wrong. But if parental discipline is carried to the point where it stunts the new individualism of the teen age, then there is no question as to what will happen. The children will certainly come to harm.

So this is at once the hardest task and the crucial test of parenthood: not merely to let the children go when we are forced to do so, but to face bravely and cheerfully the fact that the time of their emancipation is at hand, and actually to help them break away from us.

In a far greater number of instances, however, than is generally realized, parents never come to the point where they are willing to abdicate their authority. A daughter of 35 must telephone home if a shopping expedition takes a half-hour longer than was expected. A man of 50 is referred to by his father as "only a thoughtless boy." There are parents who would be very indignant if their love for their children were questioned, and yet are not willing to sacrifice their own possessive pride and sense of power, so that their children may live their own lives in their own way.

Conflicts between fathers and sons over matters of family discipline have, in the aggregate, been responsible for a vast amount of sorrow. There are several ways in which such a struggle may issue. The ideal solution, of course, is for the two parties to talk the whole situation over, and, with mutual concessions, come to a satisfactory working agreement for the future. Sometimes the son wins a victory which is too premature and complete to be entirely

safe for him. Sometimes the father wins a decisive victory, at the probable cost of a serious warping of his son's personality. More often, the son renders a submission which is only apparent; for the instinctive demand for independence is so insistent that, if denied recognition, at home, it will almost certainly seek clandestine forms of self-expression.

The not uncommon type of adolescent love affair, at bottom, is often only a hastily and perhaps unconsciously chosen device for escaping from parental control. Many a girl, especially, rushes into marriage in order to free herself from what she considers intolerable conditions at home. To such a state of mind, marriage stands for an acknowledgment of maturity; she is less concerned with her obligations. In other words, her main object in marrying is not to get anywhere with her life, but just to get away from somewhere, namely, her home. It is no wonder that such marriages are not always successful.

Other marriages turn out badly because either the bride or the groom had failed to achieve the adult independence which is essential to the wedded life. Marriage demands the shifting of the emotional focus of life from the parent to the mate. A man whose father or mother still holds the central place in his thought and affection is not prepared to make a success of the difficult business of being a husband, and a girl whose dependence on her parents is still feeling a childish need of her parents stands very little chance of being able to adjust herself to living with a man.

And the tragedy of it lies in the fact that what these people wanted most was to become free from their parents so that they might live their own lives.

So if this boy wants to follow his biggest brother on the varsity football team, I shall again take the chance of having a son crippled in body, rather than risk crippling his spirit. If he wants to go to sea, he will not have to run away; for I shall try to find him as good a berth as I did for his brother who shipped before the mast at the mature age of 16. If he falls in love with any girl whom I do not positively know to be a moron or a jailbird, I shall take a chance on her being as wonderful as he thinks she is, or if not, on his finding that out without my assistance. And whenever he shows that I am somewhat off the center of his cosmos, I shall take a chance or my new position being the ideal one for me to occupy.

For if he is ever going to make anything out of his life, he must learn how to solve his own problems; he must take his own risks and suffer for his own mistakes; he must pick his own chums, choose his own job, marry his own wife, and live in his own home. In a word, "my son" must change into a man; and because no one becomes a man overnight, I agree with him that the best time for him to start trying to be one is right now.

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