

# UNCONFESSED

By MARY HASTINGS BRADLEY

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## CHAPTER IX—Continued

"Anson wasn't there. Hiding out somewhere; reluctant to give testimony, I suppose."

I told Mitchell about my conversation with her, and her words. "She said that she'd be sorry enough to have to tell it. That any one might have washed out a handkerchief."

"But she didn't say where she saw it?" he said quickly, and I said she hadn't.

"Can't Anson be found?" I wanted to know, and he said that of course she'd be found.

He seemed to be thinking of something else as he spoke. "Donahay was allowed to put in all he's got from her—about seeing Mrs. Harriden at eight and the probable time she did the room, and its condition then and about seeing Deck in the hall. . . . He'll give Anson hell, though, for evading the law."

Deck came in at last. He came directly over to us.

"Got a cigarette?" he asked casually of Mitchell, and Mitchell offered him one. I was to remember that afterwards. Then his eyes smiled down at me. "How do you like your first inquest, Miss Seton?"

"I don't like it at all," I told him. It seemed ages before the return of that jury. They came at last, filing self-consciously across the stately hall.

The dining-room fell silent before their appearance, and even the turbulent hall was hushed as the foreman stepped forward and began reading from a paper. In a very formal voice he intoned, "We, the jury, find that the deceased, Nora Harriden, came to my death on the thirteenth of October, nineteen thirty-three, between eight and nine-thirty P. M. through shock and hemorrhage, caused by being hit on the head by a sharp instrument held in the hand of person or persons unknown."

That was all. No names. No recommendation of holding any one to the grand jury.

Then Donahay rose. The rustlings that had begun in the room ceased abruptly, so did the jubilation in my heart. For he said, "You have heard the finding of the coroner's jury. That jury is now dismissed. This case will remain in the hands of the inspector of police until further evidence warrants calling in the district attorney of Queen's county. Pending investigation no witnesses will be allowed, without permission, to leave the premises."

## CHAPTER X

Eventually every one quieted down. The sharp outbreak of protests dropped to more considering undertones at that phrase, "without permission." I overheard the Watkins reminding each other that they had meant to stay till Monday anyway, and presently Mrs. Crane's voice was audible to me, telling them that Dan was staying on too, that he planned to take his wife's body to the cemetery on Monday morning. He wanted only the simplest ceremony at the grave. She said that she and the Kellers were going with him.

When the main hall had been cleared of all the outsiders the guests streamed out into it again. Behind us, in the dining-room, swift-footed efficiency was setting out the paraphernalia of another buffet luncheon.

Every one reacted from the tenacity; laughter kept breaking out, voices ran incautiously high, then, remembering, dropped to undertones that were still lively.

I never felt lonelier in my life. I wanted some one to talk to over with, and I hadn't anybody; Deck had vanished into the drawing-room and Mitchell, too, was nowhere to be seen.

Then I heard Deck's voice, sharp as the crack of a whip. "Damn it all, Donahay, I told you myself that call never went through. . . . Am I to blame because the village telephone girl doesn't happen to remember that I asked for a New York number?"

I could see the back of Deck's head; he was confronting Donahay over that table of notes. I saw Letty Van Alstyn's brown head, tilted towards him, a little on one side. I saw Harriden standing behind her, caught a glimpse of his stony profile.

Donahay stated stolidly, "Bessie Amermann's got a very good memory, Mr. Deck. It seems queer to us that a man who goes away from a dinner table to put in a long distance call doesn't wait to get it—that he goes on upstairs after a lost handkerchief."

I was watching Deck so closely that I saw Clancy the officer touch him, saying something, and Deck, without looking around, drew out a cigarette case from his pocket, the soft brown leather one I had seen before, and passed it back. Then he said, "Come, Mr. Inspector, don't pretend you yourself never got tired waiting for a connection and went off after something else."

"Well"—mumbled Donahay. "Well?" challenged Deck. "Are we going on with this indefinitely? I'm telling you that I've got to be back on the job tomorrow or my paper will want you fellows to say why."

I didn't notice what was happening until I saw the funny look on Clancy's face. He was holding the cigarette case in his hands and feeling it with slow, investigating fingers. Then he pushed up beside Deck in front of the table.

He was dumping out the contents of the case. I saw the cigarettes come out, one after the other, and then, with another shake, something else came rolling out. Instantly the heads closed over it; I couldn't see what was there. I heard Donahay say, "By God," in an incredulous voice and Clancy, "Will you look at that?" and then somebody cried sharply, "It's the diamond!" and Harriden pushed forward.

We were all pushing forward. Through the confusion Deck's voice came, sharp with anger. "I tell you I only picked the thing up again a few minutes ago—I left it about this morning."

I had reached Mitchell now. "Oh, that's true—don't you remember he asked you for a cigarette this morning?" I gasped. "Oh, do get in to them and tell them so!"

"Steady on," Mitchell was murmuring. He put his hand over mine as it gripped his arm.

Harriden's voice dominated the confusion. He stood over Deck like a madman; he looked as if it was all he could do to keep his hands off him. "Nora's diamond!" he hurled at him.

"The big pendant that was worth the lot. . . . So you hid it out, eh? You dirty thief! You dirty killer! By God, we've got you—we've got you now!"

And then Donahay, trying to make himself heard, "Mr. Harriden, please—"

There was no stopping Harriden. All the hatred that had been working in the man, all the festering suspicion seething in him since Elkins' report of Deck's threatening words came out now, like pent-up gall.

"You hound! You skunk! Chasing after my wife, making her life miserable with your importunities. Entreating her to be 'compassionate'—to take pity on your 'love-sick soul'! Soul!" He spat out a vile word.

"Begging to drown yourself in her eyes! . . . You'll be drowned in quicklime before I'm through with you!"

And Deck, very straight and stiff, "You're crazy, Harriden. A man can't resent insults from one in your condition."

"Your condition is what will worry you—when they put you in handcuffs and lead you to the death cell—when they drag you, whining and pulling, to the electric chair!"

And then Letty Van Alstyn fainted. She dropped like a stone at Harriden's feet, and he stood there, his fury checked, looking blankly down at her. The faint did not last long; the women kneeling by her were still asking for more air, for water, for cushions, when I heard her voice saying, rather weakly, but with complete control, "How—silly! But I didn't eat—much breakfast. I've been feeling—faint."

She got up very quickly; I saw Harriden go to her side and say something; she gave him a quick upward glance, then moved away. As if he had forgotten Deck he went heavily after.

I stood there, shaken through and through. I turned to Mitchell but he had left me; he was standing beside the table, picking up the abandoned cigarettes.

The inspector was saying, his voice unemotional again "This will take some disproving, you know, Mr. Deck." And the words sent the quick thought to me that the only way to disprove this about Deck was to prove something else about some one else.

I thought of Anson. If that handkerchief I was sure she had seen had been in Letty Van Alstyn's room!

Letty had fainted. Perhaps she hadn't realized, until that moment, the consequences of throwing that suspicion upon Deck.

Now, when she was still shaken, was the time to confront her with that handkerchief evidence. . . . If only Anson could be found. . . . She must have come out of hiding by now. . . .

I ran up the stairs; I took the left-hand branch, so as to pass along the main hall, looking for some maid to question.

The door into the prince's room was open and looking in, I saw the maid who did my own room, busied about it. "Have you seen Anson yet?" I said breathlessly.

She stopped on her way to the closet with a pair of slippers in her hand. "We haven't seen her, Miss Seton. Not since that time you were talking with her this morning."

I moved away, thinking I had better get hold of Mitchell. Then I heard the maid scream. I had never heard such blood-curdling shrieks in my life. Shriek after shriek. My legs stumbled under me as I ran back to her.

She was backing hysterically away from the closet, her apron over her head. "What is it? What—"

She moaned, "Oh, in there—in there!" and began shrieking again. I dashed to the closet; the door was wide and the light from the room fell into it. Fell upon a pair of shoes, limp, black, low-heeled shoes, lying on their sides out from under a man's heavy, fur-lined overcoat.

Anson was in the closet. Slumped in a little heap. She was cold to my touch.

I did not scream. It seemed to me as if I could never make any sound again, but I did, over my shoulder, to the people crowding now in back of me.

"She's dead," I got out huskily. "Anson's dead."

## CHAPTER XI

Anson was dead. . . . Choked to death and thrust behind one of the prince's overcoats. Her pretty face was dark and terrible in congestion. She was rigid in death. She had been dead five or six hours they said.

The police were already with us; very soon the medical examiner made his appearance, together with Dr. Olliphant.

A dazed horror hung over the house. Anson—dead. The second murder. The thing was inexplicable.

"There's a maniac hiding in this house!" the princess declared in excitement. "I have felt it! Ecco—Miss Seton heard him in the night—in her room! A miracle she was not murdered in her very bed!"

It was the first expression of belief in my story I had heard from the haughty princess.

One of the strangest, most puzzling things about it to me was that out of Anson's stiff, clenched hand the medical examiner had pried a bright brown crescent, set with glittering stones.

Letty Van Alstyn's hair ornament. The broken thing she had thrown away and permitted Anson to carry off—and then demanded back from her.

It didn't make sense. She couldn't have been murdered for its possession, or the murderer would have taken it away. And why had she got it back from Miss Van Alstyn?

We were a dreadfully shaken group of people.

With drawn revolvers the police tramped through room after room, peering behind doors, beneath beds, investigating the basement, the store-rooms, the laundries, the wine cellar. And there was not a trace of an invader to be found in that great



The Prince Was Most Self-Possessed.

house. There was not a clue except the brown crescent, and not a mark on the closet door except the prints of the maid who found the body. No one had seen Anson alive since the time that I had talked with her in the hall.

Donahay had us herded all together again in the drawing room, and he barked his questions at us with the manner of a thoroughly belligerent and bewildered man.

"And just what time was that, Miss Seton?" he snapped.

I hurried to give an approximation of the time. He summed up, "Well, you'd say it was a little before nine when you saw her? And you were the last person that saw her alive."

"I think the Prince Rancini was the last person," I said quickly, remembering. "She left me to go back to his room."

Donahay shot one of his gimlet glances up at Rancini. "How about that, prince?"

The prince was most self-possessed, most affable in his reply. "Miss Seton is mistaken—I left before the poor girl reentered. I passed through the apartment of my wife and when I came out they were still talking in the hall."

"How about that, Miss Seton? He says you were still talking together when he left the premises."

"Well, I didn't see him," was all I could say.

"They were very busy talking," said the prince with satisfaction.

Donahay looked curiously at me. "What were you talking about?"

"I was waiting to ask her about whether she had seen any handkerchief drying on Friday evening. I had noticed that she didn't volunteer things directly unless she was asked, and I hadn't heard that asked."

"Couldn't you wait for the inquest?" "After all the things said about me here I think I had a right to investigate as much as I could to find the real murderer!"

"All right, all right. You were waiting to investigate. Then what were her exact words that passed between you?"

I don't know why his overbearing manner should have been so infuriating, but my nerves crisped and I said a good deal more than I had meant to say in public.

"I can keep his hands off me." Slowly the inspector's gaze shifted towards Rancini.

"Been making passes at her, prince?" Rancini smiled boldly back. "A pretty maid—" He shrugged. "Anything else?" said Donahay shortly to me.

"I asked her why she didn't complain to the princess, and she said that the maid was always wrong. Then she said she'd have to go back for the towels she had forgotten. I asked her to wait, and we had the talk about the handkerchief."

"What'd she tell you?" "Not a thing. But I had the very definite impression that she had something on her mind. She said she'd tell all she knew downstairs at the inquest, but she didn't like to make trouble—any one might have washed out a handkerchief." Then she went back into the room. And I don't think she thought that Prince Rancini had come out of it while we were talking. I flung out, "For she looked awfully bothered at having to go in again."

My eyes encountered Donahay's cynically thoughtful face. I wondered if he was thinking the same thing as I was. Suppose Rancini had been in the room when Anson returned—suppose he had grabbed her and she had started to scream? In his anger and panic he might have choked her and choked harder than he meant. He was a big fellow.

But ticking away, deep down in my mind, was the insistent thought that Anson had known something. Something about a handkerchief drying on a radiator. Something that was silenced now forever.

The prince had muttered, half angry, half soothing, "That is nonsense! There was nothing. . . ."

"All right, prince," Donahay agreed. "The girl goes back to your room but you aren't there—that's your story, and you stick to it. But now some time after that, any time in the next hour or so, somebody in that room got hold of her and choked her to death. Now where was everybody for that next hour?"

It was hard to discover where every one had been during that hour for they had moved about so much. Rancini said he had gone downstairs for a time, then up to the Kellers' sitting-room on the second floor where he and his wife had waited with the Kellers and Mrs. Crane for the summons to the inquest. The only ones who declared they had stayed definitely in their own rooms during the entire time were Alan Deck, Harriden and myself.

Harriden stated he had been either in his own room or in his wife's room the entire morning, and that he had heard no disturbance of any kind in the Rancini apartment. "And if I had, I wouldn't have cared!" Deck said he had been in his room, but that he had no proof of it. I could offer no proof, either, that I had stayed in my room, after the time the maid had gone to deliver my two notes.

I had a bad time over those notes. The one to Mitchell was easily explained, but when I admitted that I had written to Alan Deck asking him to come to see me I saw a gleam in Donahay's eyes.

"Well, now, Miss Seton, why did you want to see him?"

"It was pretty lonely, waiting for that inquest. And since Mr. Harriden had linked us in his accusations, I felt we had a lot to talk over."

Then he said to Deck, "You didn't come up this morning, though?" "Didn't get the letter till too late. The maid had left it for me on the table, and I didn't see it in time."

"Left it lying—I thought you were in your room all that time?" Deck hesitated. Then he said lightly, "Practically all. There were a few minutes when I popped into Mitchell's room to get some cigarettes."

So it all went on. There was nothing else brought out that seemed to matter. At the last the inspector concentrated on the subject of Deck's cigarette case, when he thought he had lost it, when he first found it again—in the hall, Deck said, on one of the tables, he couldn't remember exactly where—and then, very suddenly, as if his mind were making it self up, Donahay told the rest of us we were excused and retained Deck for a more private investigation.

Even Mitchell didn't sit in on that. He walked out beside me, looking very grave.

"Tea, Lelia?" "They were serving tea. The October afternoon had darkened swiftly; I saw the butlers drawing the curtains and lighting the lamps. It seemed strange to me that one of those butlers should be Elkins, his face drawn, going about his tasks so un-revealingly. No time out for his private grief.

In a few moments he was serving us tea.

Mitchell and I took it in silence; he was preoccupied, and I know I felt inexpressibly forlorn. Oh, if I had only known what to say that morning to win the girl's confidence! I was haunted by the lost opportunity, by the vision of Anson as I had first seen her down the hall, so pretty in her black and white, her arms laden with those gay colored towels. I thought crazily, "Colors for each room, each room of death," for it was to the rose room and to the orchid room that death had come, and then something in my mind brought me up short.

If I could find out—if I were not too late—

I turned what must have been a very pale and excited face on the lawyer beside me. "Oh, wait a moment!" I said incoherently. "I want to find out something—"

I literally ran towards the stairs.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

# STAR DUST

Movie • Radio

By VIRGINIA VALE

PETE SMITH of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, who's made a name for himself with his short subjects, bought a film made by an amateur on sixteen millimeter film, remade it on thirty-five millimeter, and liked the result so well that he is putting on a nationwide contest for such subjects.

Theater executives and representatives of film-selling companies all over the country will send the best films submitted to them by amateur movie makers to Mr. Smith, and he'll pick the winners.

George Arliss is busy in England making "East Meets West," and his brother, Fred H. Andrews, is equally busy at the same studio. He is advising the producers on Oriental matters connected with the picture.

It comes easily to him because he used to be curator of the Lahore museum. The veteran English character star continues to be a favorite with American movie goers. His pictures have invariably been interesting and the movie public is looking forward to his version of "East Meets West."

Imagine the feelings of one of our foremost movie stars when, as she motored through a small city recently, she saw one of her latest and best pictures advertised on the marquee of a theater—along with another feature, the Louis-Schmelinger fight picture, and the \$550 that was the evening's Bank Night award.

"At least," said she when she'd recovered, "they weren't offering people dishes as an inducement to come in and see my film!"

Football fans are going to flock to movie theaters when RKO's "The Big Game" is released. Bobby Wilson, All-American quarterback from Southern Methodist university, has just been signed for it, and along with him will appear five more star football players, all members of Stanford university's championship eleven of last fall. They are Monk Moscrip, Bones Hamilton, Keith Topping and Frank Alustiza.

Ruth Chatterton loves to fly her own plane, and does it very capably. But she's been asked not to go up in her plane while she's working in "Dodsworth"; valuable property can't be risked, you see. So she went for a whirlwind trip on a motorcycle the other night, and the company had the jitters all over again when word of it came out. First thing she knows, she'll be requested to do all her riding, if any, in a wheel chair.

If you are among the many who never fail to tune in on Colonel Stoopnagle and Bud, you may have wondered why they omitted Mr. Bopp, one of the most amusing characters on their broadcasts, the first time they substituted for the vacationing Fred Allen.

The Colonel had his tonsils out a few days before the broadcast. And he plays Mr. Bopp, which is very hard on the voice.

You may recall that Merle Oberon was slated for "The Garden of Allah" till Marlene Dietrich came along and got the role. Merle was upset, and decided to sue the producers.

The matter was settled out of court very nicely. Miss Oberon received \$10,000 in addition to the \$12,000 which she got before she lost the part. And she's to do another picture, "It Happened in Hollywood," which will bring in another \$60,000. Not so bad.

Bette Davis has been having her troubles. Her salary and the kind of roles assigned her caused the difficulty, and, after she failed to show up for three weeks to work in "God's Country and the Woman" she was suspended by Warner Brothers.

ODDS AND ENDS. . . . Mary Pickford's plans to produce pictures seem to have suffered a setback, with the breaking up of the company. . . . Lewis Stone's daughter is going to get married. . . . And Lewis is going to take a yachting trip when he finishes his current picture. . . . Ruth Chatterton and Ginger Rogers will appear in "Mother Gary's Chickens," with Anne Shirley and John Beale. . . . Myrna Loy and William Powell will be seen together again in "The Last of Mrs. Cheyney." . . . Claudette Colbert and her husband are taking a motor trip, driving an inexpensive car and wearing old clothes and having a grand time. . . . Graham McNamee has a brand new contract with Universal news reel, though his old one hasn't expired yet.

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## GETTING SOMEWHERE

The two tramps were stretched out on the green grass. Above them was the warm sun, beside them was a babbling brook. It was a quiet, restful, peaceful scene.

"Boy," mused the first tramp contentedly, "right now I wouldn't change places with a guy who owns a million bucks!"

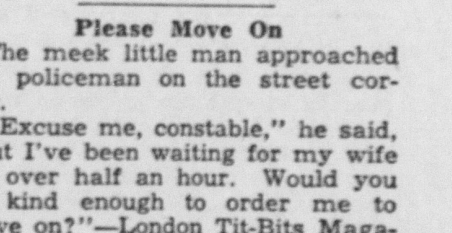
"How about five million?" asked his companion.

"Not even for five million," drowsed the first tramp.

"Well," persisted his pal, "how about ten million bucks?"

The first tramp sat up. "That's different," he admitted. "Now you're talking real dough!" —Mark Hellinger in the New York American.

## SOME HELP



"This boy who graduated is a good advertisement for you, professor."

"How so?"

"He acts like he knows everything in the world."

## The Start

A surgeon, an architect and a politician were arguing as to whose profession was the oldest. Said the surgeon: "Eve was made from Adam's rib, and that surely was a surgical operation."

"Maybe," said the architect, "but prior to that, order was created out of chaos, and that was an architectural job."

"But," interrupted the politician, "somebody created the chaos first!"

## Please Move On

The meek little man approached the policeman on the street corner.

"Excuse me, constable," he said, "but I've been waiting for my wife for over half an hour. Would you be kind enough to order me to move on?"—London Tit-Bits Magazine.

## Nothing to Stop It!

Mother—Everything I say to you goes in one ear and out the other. Betty (innocently)—Is that why I have two ears, Mummy?

## A Human Zero

"How's that widower you married turning out as a husband?" the former widow was asked.

"A pain in the neck," she sighed, "the poor fish was so cowed by his first wife there even isn't any pleasure fussing with him."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

## ALL SETTLED



"Have you decided where you're going on your vacation this year?"

"Yes! I'm going to whatever place my wife selects."

## While Rome Burned

Nero had just completed his historical solo.

"There's no use of trying to uplift the public," he said. "Think of a crowd that would rather run to look at a fire than hear me play the violin!"

## Mental Attitude

"I wouldn't marry the best man on earth," said the irate young woman.

"And if you did," said Miss Cayenne, "you'd never believe it."

## Needed More Encouragement

"I'm afraid to propose to her."

"But doesn't she give you any encouragement?"

"Well, she gives me a whisky and soda every time I call, but, hang it one isn't enough."—Stray Stories Magazine.

## Hunger Strike

Mother—What is it, dear? New Bride—Jack has gone on a hunger strike. He won't eat a single thing I cook.—Pathfinder Magazine.