

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

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SYNOPSIS

Frank Spargo, a young London newspaperman, on returning home from his work late one night, is attracted by a couple of men peering into a dark corner in an alleyway. Investigation showed that a man was reclining against a wall and that he was dead, murdered, it seemed. In his pocket there is found the name and address "Ronald Breton, Barrister and Solicitor, King's Bench Walk, Temple, London."

(AND HERE IT CONTINUES)

"JOURNALIST," he said. "Mr. Spargo, of the Waterman. Mr. Spargo was there when the body was found. And he knows Mr. Breton. Then he nodded toward Spargo's street. Then he nodded toward Spargo's street. "This is Detective Sergeant Rathbury, from the Yard," he said to Spargo. "He's come to take charge of this case."

"What's the name?" he asked, suddenly turning on the detective. "I should like to know what he had on him before I answered that question," Mr. Spargo, replied Rathbury, with a smile. "Yes, said Spargo, dreamily. "I suppose so. He might have had nothing on him, eh?"

"The detective laughed, and pointed to a board on which names were printed. "We don't know anything yet, sir," he observed. "Except that Mr. Breton is on the fourth floor. By the way, I can assure that it isn't long since he was eating his dinner."

"Oh, he's young—he's quite young," said Spargo. "I should say he's about four-and-twenty. I've met him only at that moment the unmistakable sounds of girlish laughter came down the stairs. Two girls seemed to be laughing—presently masculine laughter mingled with the lighter feminine. "Seems to be studying law in a very pleasant fashion in any way," said Rathbury. "Mr. Breton's chambers, too. And the door's open. The outer oak door of Ronald Breton's chambers stood wide; the inner one was well ajar; through the opening thus made Spargo and the detective obtained a full view of the interior of Mr. Breton's rooms. There, against a background of law books, bundles of papers tied up with pink tape, and black-framed pictures of famous legal notables, they saw a pretty, vivacious-eyed girl, who, perched on a chair, wiggled and gowned, and flourishing a mass of crisp paper, was arranging an imaginary trial. The jury, to the amusement of a young man who had his back to the door, and of another girl who leaned confidentially against his shoulder. "I put it to you, gentlemen of the jury—I put it to you with confidence, feeling that you must be, must necessarily be, some, perhaps the best, the most capable, the most learned, the most experienced, the most conscientious of my client the great wrong, the irreparable injury, the— "Think of some more adjectives!" exclaimed the young man. "Hot and strong 'uns—pile 'em up. That's what they like—hey—Hullo!

"What can I do for you, Mr. Spargo?" He had backed to the inner door and turned again to the two men, looking from one to the other. The detective, on his part, was looking at the young barrister. He saw a tall, slim, built-up young man of handsome features and impressive presence, perfectly groomed and immaculately garbed, and having upon him a general air of well-to-do-ness. "The impression from these matters that Mr. Breton was one of those fortunate young men who may take up a profession, but are certainly not dependent upon it. He turned and glanced at the journal. "How do you do?" said Spargo slowly. "I—the fact is, I came here with Mr. Rathbury. He wants to see you. Detective Sergeant Rathbury—of New Scotland Yard."

"Spargo pronounced this formal introduction as if he were repeating a lesson as he was waiting for the young barrister's face. And Breton turned to the detective with a look of surprise. "Rathbury, he said, you wish— "Rathbury had been fumbling in his pocket for the scrap of paper, which he had carefully bestowed in a much-worn memorandum book. "I wished to ask a question, Mr. Breton," he said. "This morning, about a quarter to three, a man—elderly man—was found dead in Middle Temple lane, and there seems little doubt that he was murdered. Mr. Spargo here—he was present when the body was found."

"Soon after," corrected Spargo. "A few minutes after," continued Spargo. "When this body was examined at the mortuary," continued Rathbury, in his matter-of-fact, business-like lead to identification. The man appears to have been robbed. There was nothing whatever on him—but this bit of paper, which was found in a hole in the lining of his waistcoat pocket. It's got your name and address on it, Mr. Breton. See?"

"Ronald Breton took the scrap of paper and looked at it with knitted brows. "By Jove!" he muttered. "So it has; that's queer. What's he like, this man?" "Will you stop round and take a look at him, Mr. Breton?" he said. "It's close by."

"Well—I—the fact is, I've got a case on, in Mr. Justice Borrow's court," Breton answered, also glancing at his clock. "But it won't be called until after eleven. Will— "Plenty of time, sir," said Rathbury. "It won't take you ten minutes to go round and back again—a look will do. You don't recognize this handwriting, I suppose?"

Breton still held the scrap of paper in his fingers. He looked at it again, intently. "No," he answered. "I don't. I don't know it at all—I can't think, of course, who this man could be, to have my name and address. I thought he might have been some country solicitor, waiting for a professional services, you know," he went on, with a shy smile at Spargo. "But 3-3 o'clock in the morning, eh?"

"The doctor," observed Rathbury. "The doctor thinks he had been dead about two and a half hours."

Breton turned to the inner door. "I'll just tell these ladies I'm going out for a quarter of an hour," he said. "They're going over to the court with me—I got my first brief yesterday." He went on with a boyish laugh, glancing right and left at his visitors. "It's nothing much—small case—but I promised my fiancée and her sister that they should be present, you know. A moment."

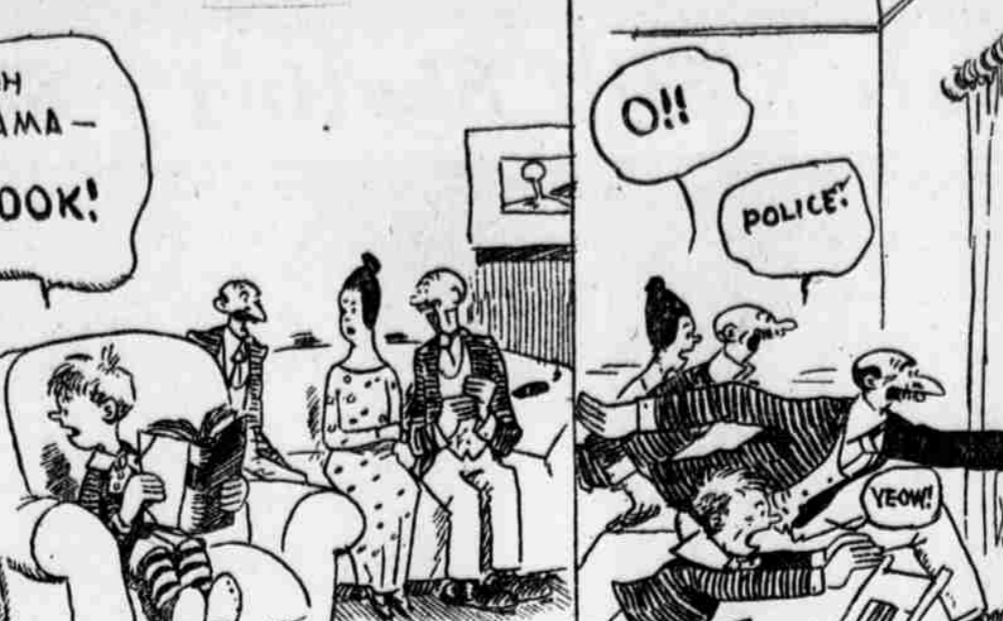
He disappeared into the next room and came back a moment later in all the glory of a new silk hat. Spargo, a young man who was never very particular about his dress, began to contrast his own attire with the butterfly appearance of this youngster; he had been quick to notice that the two girls who had whisked into the inner room had been similarly garbed in fine rakish, more characteristic of Mayfair than of Fleet Street. Already he had a strange curiosity about Breton, and about the young ladies whom he heard talking behind the inner door.

"Well, come on," said Breton. "Let's go straight there."

The mortuary to which Rathbury led the way was cold, drab, repellent to the general gay sense of the summer morning. Spargo shivered involuntarily as he entered it and took a first glance around. But the young barrister showed no sign of feeling or concern; he looked quickly about him and stepped alertly to the side of the dead man, from whose face the detective was turning back a cloth. He looked steadily and earnestly at the fixed features. Then he drew back, shaking his head.

THE GUMPS—The Face at the Window

THERE IS SOMETHING THE MATTER WITH OLD ANDY TO-NIGHT — HE CAN'T SIT STILL. HE HAS USED TWO BOXES OF MATCHES ON HIS LAST CHRISTMAS CIGAR. AND WITHOUT KNOWING WHY HE HAS GONE TO THE DOOR ON TWO DIFFERENT OCCASIONS AND LOOKED OUT. UNCLE BIM IS NOT HIMSELF EITNER—EVEN CHESTER'S DOG WHINES IN HIS SLEEP.



THE FACE AT THE WINDOW AGAIN. THERE IS NO MISTAKING IT NOW — IT WAS LITTLE CHESTER THAT SAW IT THIS TIME —

THAT CERTAINLY IS STRANGE.

WHAT CAN IT BE?

NO WONDER THAT BIRD MOVED OUT OF THIS FLAT.

IF YOU SEE UNCLE BIM? DID YOU NOTICE THE TWITCHING OF THE MUSCLES AROUND HIS MOUTH? DID YOU SEE THAT ASPEN COLOR SPREAD OVER HIS COUNTENANCE AT THE MENTION OF THAT FACE AGAIN? I TELL YOU THERE'S SOMETHING UP HAS HE A PAST? TIME ALONE WILL TELL.

SIDNEY SMITH.

PETEY—Sister Sylvia Says Something

— WELL — IT'S SISTER SYLVIA EXERCISING, TRYING TO BEAUTIFY HERSELF I GUESS. TO LOOK SOME POOR BOOB.

— WHAT THE DICKENS IS ALL THAT GOING ON?

— I DON'T SEE WHY IT SHOULDN'T WORK THE OTHER WAY THIS YEAR!



DREAMLAND ADVENTURES

MR. MOON LOSES HIS HEAD

Peggy Gets into an Argument

(Peggy is called to the Man to help the Man in the Moon find his lost head.)

PEGGY gazed at the Man in the Moon with surprised eyes.

"Where is my lost head?" he believed at her. What surprised her was the fact that while he was yelling about his lost head there was his round, shiny head on his shoulders, right where it belonged.

"Why, you're wearing your head. You can see for yourself," and Peggy held up to the Man in the Moon her tiny pocket mirror.

"I tell you I have lost my head. Can't you understand plain Moon talk?" believed the Man in the Moon after a quick peek into the glass.

"I guess you have lost your head— or, at least, the insides of it—or you wouldn't sit there shouting about losing it when every one can see it on you as plain as the nose on your face," said Peggy, severely.

"If you can see it, where is it then?" demanded the Man in the Moon, feeling all around his glowing bald pate.

"Why, here it is," declared Peggy, tapping his head smartly with her knuckles.

"Oh, that hurts! And you're not so smart as you think you are, for this isn't the head I've lost," howled the Man in the Moon.

"But it's your head and you say you've lost your head," argued Peggy, much puzzled. "And nobody has more than one head, except, perhaps, giants in fairy books."

"I'm not a giant in a storybook and I have thirteen heads," believed the Man in the Moon.

"Circulous, what do you do with thirteen heads?" asked Peggy in amazement.

"Wear 'em, of course," snapped the Man in the Moon. "What would I do with them?"

"But no one needs thirteen heads—one is enough," insisted Peggy.

"Of course one is enough—one for each season of the year, and there are thirteen Moon seasons, so I have to have thirteen heads," said the Man in the Moon. That sounded very queer to Peggy, and she didn't know what to say in answer. So she just stared at the

The Young Lady Across the Way



Adding an Extra Section of Stooppipe to the Club House Chimney—By Fontaine Fox



SCHOOL DAYS



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—She "Mothers" the Boss

BOSS, IT'S COLD OUT! DON'T FORGET TO WEAR YOUR MUFFLER AND PUT ON YOUR KNIT VEST!

HERE—YOU FOGOT YOUR RUBBERS—YOU MUST WEAR THEM—IT'S AWFUL SLIPPERY OUT.

DON'T PAMPER ME! I SAY I DON'T WANT MY RUBBERS! I'M NOT A TWO YEAR OLD! DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW HOW TO STAND UP?



DOROTHY DARNIT—Too Much Kick for the Engine

HELLO KID

OH! SUCH WORDS

WHAT'S THE MATTER MISTER?

MY ENGINES DEAD

NO WONDER LOOK—

WOOD ALCOHOL

