

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

Copyright, 1920, Fred A. Knopf, Copyright, 1920, by the Public Ledger Co. SYNOPSIS Frank Spargo, a young London newspaperman, returning home from his work late one night, sees a couple of men peering into the corner of an alleyway. Investigation reveals a man, dead, murdered, it seemed. In his pocket he found the name "Ronald Breton, Barrister-at-Law, 25, Beach Walk, Temple, London." Breton as he does not know the man. At his hotel he registered as John Marbury. He received but one visitor, a tall well-dressed man with a gray beard. He ordered whisky and soda, paying for it from a handful of sovereigns, but hadn't a penny piece on him when he was found dead. William Webster tells of sitting next to Marbury while lobbying in the House of Commons the night of the murder, and of Marbury's excitement on the appearance of a tall well-dressed man—Stephen Aylmore, M. P. They left the House together, seeking further information Spargo again visits the hotel keeper. "You can tell me anything you tell the detective," he says. (AND HERE IT CONTINUES) THE landlady rummaged in her pocket and produced an old purse, from an inner compartment of which she brought out a small object wrapped in tissue paper. "Well," she said, "unwrapping the paper, we found this in number 20 this morning—it was lying under the dressing-table. The girl that found it brought it to me, and I thought it was a bit of glass, but Walters, he says now he shouldn't be surprised if it's a diamond. And since we found it the waiter who took the whisky up to 20, after Mr. Marbury came in with the other gentleman, has told me that when he went into the room the two gentlemen were looking at a paper full of things like this. So there?" Spargo fingered the shining bit of stone. "That's a diamond—right enough," he said. "But it's awfully small. Walters I shall see Hathbury presently and I'll tell him about it. Now, that other gentleman? You told us you saw him. Could you recognize him?—I mean, a photograph of him? Is this the man?" Spargo knew from the expression of Mrs. Walters' face that she had no doubt that Webster had. "Oh, yes!" she said. "That's the gentleman who came in with Mr. Marbury—I should have known him in a thousand. Anybody would recognize him from that—perhaps you'd let our hall-porter and the waiter I mentioned just now look at it?" "I'll see them separately and see if they've ever seen a man who resembles this," replied Spargo. The two men recognized the photograph at once, without any prompting, and Spargo, after a word or two with the landlady, rode off to the Atlantic and Pacific Club and found Ronald Breton awaiting him on the steps. He made no reference to his recent doings and together they went into the house and asked for Mrs. Aylmore. Spargo looked with more than uncommon interest at the man who presently turned out to be the man who had been already familiar with Mr. Aylmore's photograph, but he never remembered seeing him in real life; the number for Brookminster was one of those rapidly changing bodies of legislators whose members are disposed to work quietly and unobtrusively, doing woman service on committees, obeying every order of the party whip, without forcing themselves into the limelight or seizing every opportunity to air their opinions. Now that Spargo met him in the flesh he proved to be pretty much what the journalist had expected—a rather cold-blooded, self-contained man, who looked as if he had been brought up in a school of rigid repression. He seemed not to waste words. He showed no more than the merest of languid interest in Spargo when Breton introduced him, and his face was quite expressionless when Spargo brought to an end his brief explanation—purposely shortened of his object in calling upon him. "Yes," he said indifferently. "Yes, it is quite true that I met Marbury and spent a little time with him on the evening your informant spoke of. I met him, as he told you, in the lobby of the house. I was much surprised to meet him. I had not seen him for—I really don't know how many years." He paused and looked at Spargo as if he was wondering what he ought or not to say to a newspaper man. Spargo remained silent, waiting. And presently Mr. Aylmore went on. "I read your account in the Watchman this morning," he said. "It was wonderful when you called just now, if I would communicate with you or with the police. The fact is—I suppose you want this for your paper, eh?" he continued after a sudden breaking off. "I shall not print anything that you wish me not to print," answered Spargo. "If you care to give me any information—" "Oh, well!" said Mr. Aylmore. "I don't mind. The fact is, I know next to nothing. Marbury was a man with whom I had some—well, business relations, of a sort—a great many years ago. It must be twenty years—perhaps more—since I lost sight of him. When he came up to me in the lobby the other night, I had to make an effort of memory to recall him. He wished me, having once met me, to give him some advice, and as there was little doing in the house that night, and as he had once been to my hotel, I called to my hotel with him, chatting. He told me that he had only landed from Australia that morning, and what he wanted my advice about, principally, was—diamonds. Australian diamonds." "I was unaware," remarked Spargo, "that diamonds were ever found in Australia." Mr. Aylmore smiled—a little cynically. "Perhaps so," he said. "But diamonds have been found in Australia from time to time ever since Australia was known to Europeans, and in the opinion of experts, they will eventually be found there in quantity. Anyhow, Marbury had got hold of some Australian diamonds, and he showed them to me at his hotel—a number of them. We examined them in his room." "What did he do with them—afterward?" asked Spargo. "He put them in his waistcoat pocket—in a very small wash-leather bag, from which he had taken them. There were, in all, sixteen or twenty stones—not more, and they were all small. I advised him to see some expert—I mentioned Streeter's to him. Now I can tell you how he got hold of Mr. Breton's address." "The two young men picked up their ears," Spargo unconsciously tightened his hold on the pencil with which he was making notes. "He got it from me," continued Mr. Aylmore. "The handwriting on the scrap of paper is mine, hurriedly scrawled. He wanted legal advice. 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"My own impression—though I confess it may seem to have no very solid grounds—is that Marbury was decoyed to where he was found, and was robbed and murdered by some person who knew his habits and valuables on him. There is the fact that he was robbed, at any rate." "I've had a notion," said Breton, diffidently. "Maybe he was worth much, but I've had it, all the same. Some fellow-passenger of Marbury's may have tracked him all day—Middle Temple lane's pretty lonely at night, you know." No one made any comment upon this suggestion, and on Spargo looking at Mr. Aylmore, the member of Parliament rose and glanced at the door. "Well, that's all I can tell you, Mr. Spargo," he said. "You see, it's not much, after all. Of course, there'll be an inquest on Marbury, and I shall have to retell it. But you're welcome to print what I've told you." Spargo left Breton with his future father-in-law and went away toward New Scotland Yard. He and Hathbury had promised to share news—now he had some to communicate. (CONTINUED TOMORROW)

THE GUMPS—Welcome



PETEY—Now He's Worrying About How to Get the Cure



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The Young Lady Across the Way



The young lady across the way says she has three cousins, but her Aunt Lucie is her only avuncular relative.

EMERGENCY WAGON NO. 1



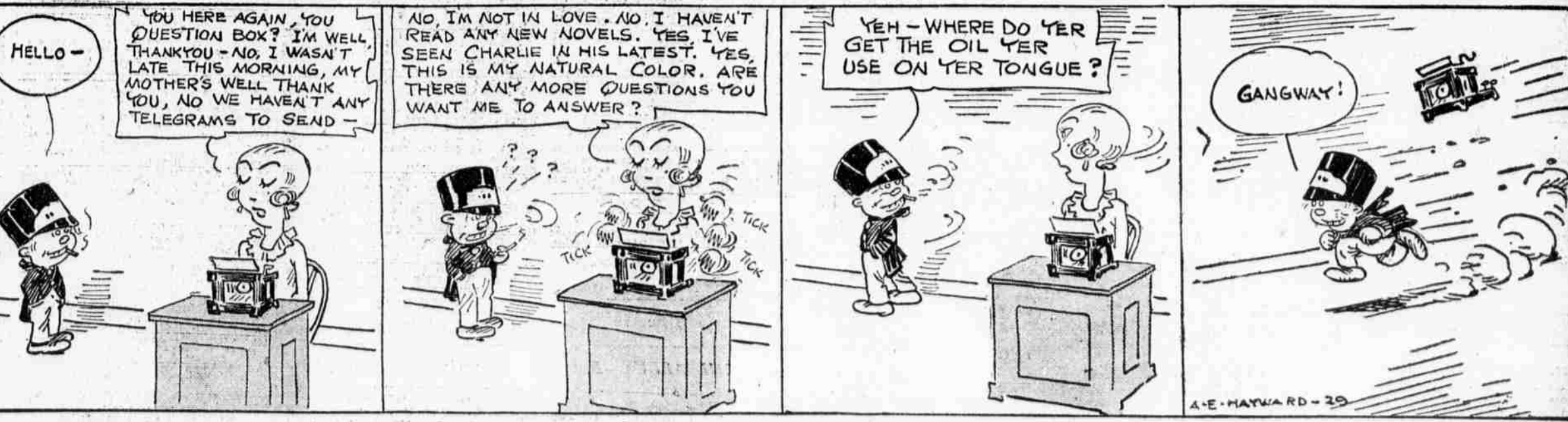
By FONTAINE FOX

"CAP" STUBBS—"Cap's" Ambition



By Edwin

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Score Another for the Messenger Boy



DREAMLAND ADVENTURES

THE GIANT OF MOVIELAND By DADDY Peggy, Billy, the Giant of the Woods and their animal and bird friends explore a moving-picture city, and find themselves called upon to be actors. CHAPTER IV The Castle on the Crag WHERE does the awful Giant Fierce Fangs keep himself? asked Peggy, after Red Beard, the moving-picture maker, had told her she could be the heroine of his photoplay, but must defy the Giant Fierce Fangs. "There, in the castle on the hilltop," answered Red Beard, pointing upward to a bleak stone fortress that stood on a crag overlooking the town. "Fierce Fangs lives all alone, for he is too awful for any one to live with him. And because he lives alone he is lonesome. That is why he wants to steal you from your hero lover and make you his unhappy bride." "I don't want to be his unhappy bride," declared Peggy. "Of course not, and you will not see if Billy proves a true hero and rescues you from his clutches," said Red Beard. "But suppose Billy shouldn't be able to rescue me," suggested Peggy, looking up doubtfully at the cold, gray walls of the castle, and then down at Billy. "The walls seemed very big and seemed very small. "Then you will be doomed to a life of misery and my picture will be spoiled," declared Red Beard. "Never fear, Peggy; I'll fight a dozen giants to save you," promised Billy. "And I'll help him," declared the Giant of the Woods. "Hee-haw, and I'll save you all," brayed Bally Sam, speaking for himself, Billy Goat, Johnny Bull and the birds. "We must make pictures while the sun shines, and soon it will be dark," said Red Beard, and he got his camera ready. "Say farewell to your friends, and dance forth gaily to gather wild flowers among the hills. Be happy and loyal, for though you know it not, the Giant Fierce Fangs, hidden behind his castle walls, is watching you from afar with his telescope, and leaning evilly as

DOROTHY DARNIT—Absent Treatment for Dolly

