

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

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THIS STARTS THE STORY

Frank Spargo, London newspaper man, sees two men peering into the corner of an alleyway and finds there a murdered man. In his pocket is a diamond—Bretton's diamond. A man named "Bretton" says he does not know the man. At his hotel he registered as "John Marbury." He had one visitor, a well-dressed man with a gray beard. A man sitting next to Marbury while lobbying in the House of Commons tells of his excitement on the appearance of a tall man with a diamond—Stephen Aymlor, M. P. They left the House together. The hotelkeeper finds a "stone" in Marbury's room and the diamond—in Marbury's room and the diamond—in Marbury's room. The porter of the Temple tells of Aymlor and Marbury entering the Temple at past 12 on the night of the murder, and that he has seen Aymlor as Mr. Anderson for a number of years. "Is this quite true," asks the counsel. "It was true," Aymlor admits.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

AYMLOR: You told me, on oath, that you parted from John Marbury on Waterloo Bridge. I said nothing of the sort. I said that from the Anglo-Orient Hotel we strolled across Waterloo Bridge, and that shortly afterward we parted. I did not say where we parted. There is a shorthand writer here who is taking everything down—ask him if that is not exactly what I said? A reference to the stenographer proved Aymlor to be right, and the treasury counsel showed plain annoyance.

"Well, at any rate, you so phrased your answer that nine persons out of ten would have understood that you parted from Marbury in the open streets after crossing Waterloo Bridge," he said. "Now—?"

Aymlor smiled. "I am not responsible for the understanding of nine people out of ten any more than I am for your understanding," he said, with a sneer. "I said what I saw—Marbury and I."

"I left them on purpose to speak to you," she answered. "They knew I did. I am well accustomed to looking after myself."

Spargo moved down the by-street, motioning his companion to move with him. "Tea," he said, "is what you want. I know a queer, old-fashioned place close by where you can get the best China tea in London. Come and have some."

Jessie Aymlor smiled and followed her guide obediently. And Spargo said nothing, marching stolidly along with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, his fingers playing soundless tunes outside, until he had installed himself and his companion in a quiet nook in the old tea-house he had told her of and had given an order for tea and hot cakes to a waitress who evidently knew him. Then he turned to her.

"You want," he said, "to talk to me about your father?"

"Yes," she answered. "I do."

"Why?" asked Spargo.

The girl gave him a searching look. "Ronald Bretton says you're the man who's written all those special articles in the Watchman about the Marbury case," she answered. "Are you?"

"I am," said Spargo.

"Then you're a man of great influence," she went on. "You can stir the public mind. Mr. Spargo, what are you going to write about my father and today's proceedings?"

Spargo signed to her to pour out the tea which had just arrived. He seized, without ceremony, upon a piece of the hot buttered tea-cake, and bit a great lump out of it.

"Frankly," he mumbled, speaking with his mouth full, "frankly, I don't know. I don't know—yet. But I'll tell you this—it's best to be candid—I shouldn't allow myself to be prejudiced or biased in making up my conclusions by anything that you may say to me. Understand?"

Jessie Aymlor took a sudden liking to Spargo because of the unconventional and brusqueness of his manners.

"I'm not wanting to prejudice or bias you," she said.

"All I want is that you should be very sure before you say anything."

"I'll be sure," said Spargo. "Don't bother. Is the tea all right?"

"Beautiful!" she answered, with a smile that made Spargo look at her again. "Delightful! Mr. Spargo, tell me—what did you think about—about what has just happened?"

"What reasons were or are they which prevented you from telling all this at first?" asked the treasury counsel.

"Reasons which are private to me," "Will you tell them to the court?"

"Then will you tell us why Marbury went with you to the chambers in the Fountain Court which you tenant under the name of Anderson?"

"Yes. To fetch a document which I had in my keeping, and had kept for him for twenty years or more?"

"Reasons which are private to me," "Will you tell them to the court?"

"Then will you tell us why Marbury went with you to the chambers in the Fountain Court which you tenant under the name of Anderson?"

"Yes. To fetch a document which I had in my keeping, and had kept for him for twenty years or more?"

"Of very great importance?"

"He would have it on him when he was—as we believe he was—murdered and robbed?"

"He had it on him when he left me," "Will you tell us what it was?"

"Certainly not!"

"In fact, you won't tell us any more than you choose to tell?"

"I have told you all I can tell of the events of that night."

"Then I am going to ask you a very pertinent question. Is it not a fact that you know a great deal more about John Marbury than you have told this court?"

"That I shall not answer."

"Is it not a fact that you could, if you would, tell this court more about John Marbury and your acquaintance with him twenty years ago?"

"I also decline to answer that."

The treasury counsel made a little movement of his shoulders and turned to the coroner.

"I should suggest, sir, that you adjourn this inquiry," he said quietly.

"For a week," assented the coroner, turning to the jury.

The crowd surged out of the court, chattering, murmuring, exclaiming—spectators, witnesses, jurymen, reporters, legal folk, police folk, all mixed up together. And Spargo, elbowing his own way out, and busily reckoning up the value of the new complexion put on everything by the day's work, suddenly felt a hand laid on his arm. Turning he found himself gazing at Jessie Aymlor.

"Yes?" he said quietly.

Jessie Aymlor looked up at him, smiling faintly.

"I want to speak to you," she said. "I must speak to you."

"Yes," said Spargo. "But—the others? Your sister—Bretton?"

"I left them on purpose to speak to you," she answered. "They knew I did. I am well accustomed to looking after myself."

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THE GUMPS—Ho! Ho! Ho! Har! Har! Hee!

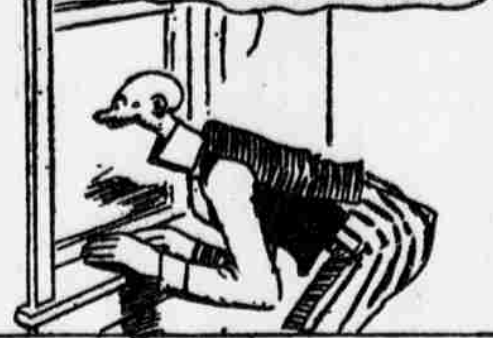
"HAW! HAW! HAW—WHEN I SAW THE LOOK ON HER FACE WHEN SHE HEARD THAT UNCLE BIM WASN'T COMING BACK"



"WHEE! IT GIVES ME A LAUGH—THAT WAS A BODY BLOW FOR THAT OLD SEA LION—SHE HASN'T SMILED SINCE—SHE'S FINDING FAULT WITH EVERYBODY—OH CHESTER, SIT DOWN—YOUR SHOES GOEAK—YOU MAKE ME NERVOUS—SHE EVEN HAD A FIGHT WITH MIN THIS MORNING"



"THERE GOES THE CAR—I WATE TO SEE IT GO BUT YOU CAN'T MAKE ME BLUE TO DAY—I TOOK A PEEK IN MY ROOM AND I SAW THE OLD TRUNK OPEN AND HER CLOTHES LAYING OUT ON THE BED. IT LOOKS LIKE A RETURN TRIP."



"COME ON—HIT ME ON THE HEAD WITH A CLUB—I'M TOO HAPPY—STICK SOME PINS IN ME I'M LAUGHING MYSELF TO DEATH"



SIDNEY SMITH

PETEE—Ain't He the Little Rascal, Tho'?



By C. A. Voight

DREAMLAND ADVENTURES

BLUE EYES AND CROOKED NOSE

By DADDY

(In last week's story Peggy, Billy and the Giant of the Woods had an amazing adventure in Movieland. Giant Fierce Fangs had told Peggy as his step-daughter and said he was going to marry her to his nephew, Crooked Nose, the son of Belinda, the Cook.)

CHAPTER I

The Blue-Eyed Youth

PEGGY found herself among her bird friends on a hill in Movieland. How she got there she didn't know, nor did she have a chance to ask, for the birds were shrieking and jabbering as noisily as children at a picnic.

"I'm going to be best man at the wedding," creaked Blue Heron.

"I'm going to be head usher," shrilled General Swallow.

"I'm going to give the bride away," screamed Blue Jay.

"Hoo! Hoo!" I'll be the groom," boasted Judge Owl.

"Indeed, you will not be the groom," said a shrill voice, and there was Belinda, the cook of Giant Fierce Fangs, as her way home from market with a basket of canned beans, canned peas, and canned corn. "My son, the dwarf, Crooked Nose, is to be the groom," she declared.

Peggy was glad to hear that for when she had been in Movieland before, Giant Fierce Fangs had told her that when she grew up she must marry the dwarf, Crooked Nose. Now, it seemed, he was to wed some one else.

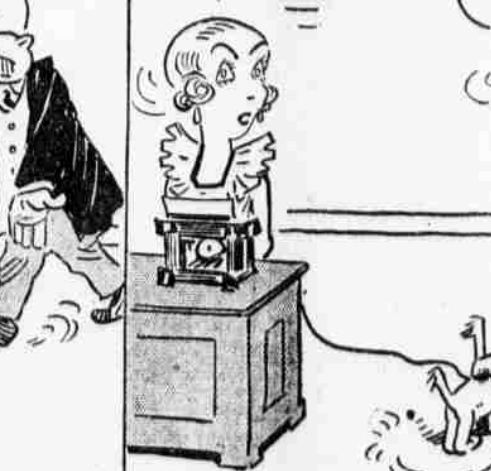
"Who is Crooked Nose going to marry?" she asked.

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—It Looks Like a Fine Place for a Dog

"ER-MISS OF LAGE—I MUST TELL YOU—THIS IS—"



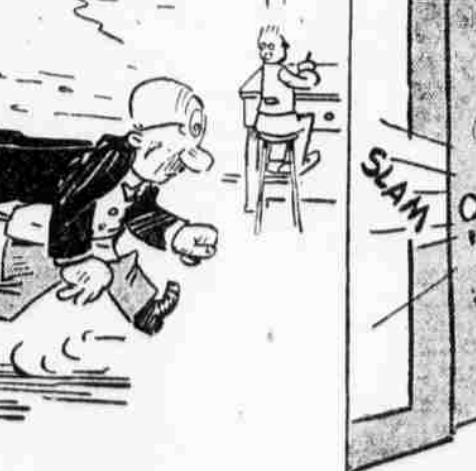
"—NO PLACE—"



"—FOR A—DOG!"



"—NO PLACE—"



"—FOR A—DOG!"



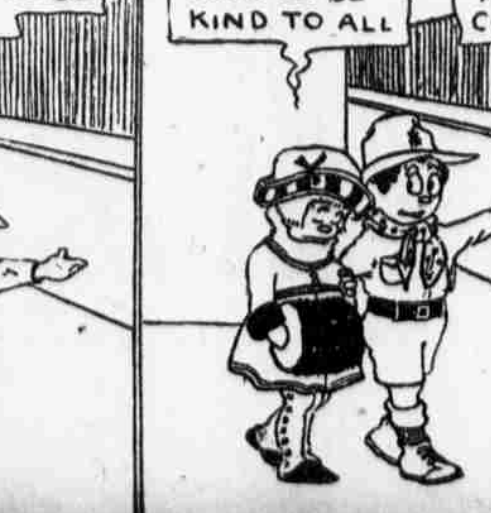
By Hayward

DOROTHY DARNIT—Charity Begins at Home

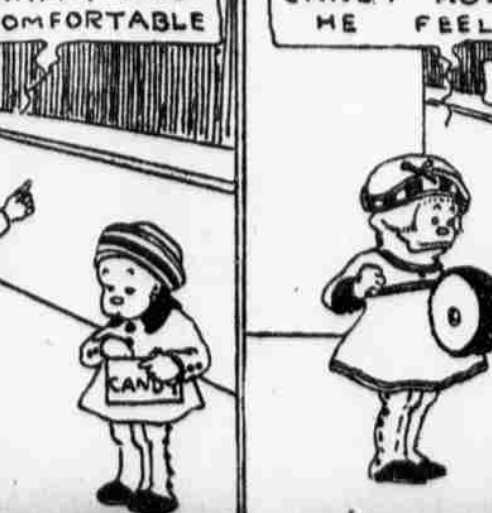
"OF ALL THE BOYS I KNOW YOU ARE THE KINDEST"



"IT IS A BOY SCOUT'S DUTY TO BE KIND"



"YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I WANT TO BE KIND TO ALL"



"YOU SHOULD MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY AND COMFORTABLE"



"WELL IF A PERSON EATS TOO MUCH CANDY HOW DOES HE FEEL?"



By Chas. McManus