

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

This Starts the Story Frank Spargo, a young London newspaperman, returning home from his work late one night, sees a couple of men peering into a corner of an alleyway. Investigation reveals a man, dead, murdered. It seemed, in his pocket he registered the name "Ronald Dretton, lobbyist, Kings Bench Walk, Temple, London." Brelton ascertains he does not know the man. At his hotel he registered as "John Marbury." He received only one visitor—a tall well-dressed man with a gray beard. He paid for whisky and soda from a handful of sovereigns, but hadn't a penny piece on him when found dead. William Webster tells of sitting next to Marbury while lobbying in the House of Commons and of Marbury's excitement on the appearance of a tall, well-dressed man—Stephen Aylmore, M. P. They left the house together. Spargo visits the hotelkeeper. She shows him a shining piece of stone, a diamond, found in his room. The waiter testifies to having seen a number of these "stones" in Marbury's room when Aylmore was visiting him. Aylmore is visited and admits to having known the dead man a number of years back, but withholds facts. Aylmore's daughter, who is the adopted son of a Mr. Elphick, also an attorney. "But Elphick was murdered for the sake of the man who had on him—when I meet with the murderer or murderers? Criminals don't hang about Middle Temple Lane."

(AND HERE IT CONTINUES)

The detective shook his head. He picked up his pencil and began making more hieroglyphics. "What's your theory, Mr. Spargo?" he asked suddenly. "I suppose you've got one." "Have you?" asked Spargo, bluntly. "Well," returned Rathbury, hesitatingly. "I hadn't up to now. But now in Marbury's room when I was visiting him, Aylmore told me, I think I can make one. It seems to me that after Marbury left Aylmore he probably mooned about by himself, that he was decaying in the Temple, and was there murdered and robbed. There are a lot of queer ins and outs, nooks and corners in that old spot, Mr. Spargo, and the murderer, if he knew his ground well, could easily hide himself until he could get away in the morning. He might be a man who had access to chambers or offices—think how easy it would be for such a man, having once killed and robbed his victim, to lie hid for hours afterward? For Marbury may have been within twenty feet of you when you first saw his dead body that morning. Eh?"

Before Spargo could reply to this suggestion an official entered the room and whispered a few words in the detective's ear. "Show him in at once," said Rathbury. He turned to Spargo as the man quitted the room and smiled significantly. "Here's somebody wants to tell something about the Marbury case," he remarked. "Let's hope it'll be news worth hearing."

Spargo smiled in his queer fashion. "It strikes me that you've just got to enter it as an inquisitive public in order to get news," he said. "The principal thing is to investigate it when you've got it. Who's this, now?"

The official had returned with a dapper-looking gentleman in a frock coat and silk hat, bearing upon him the unmistakable stamp of the city man, who inspected Rathbury with a deferential air and Spargo with a glance, and being seated, turned to the detective as undoubtedly the person he desired to converse with.

"I understand that you are the officer in charge of the Marbury murder case," he observed. "I believe I can give you some valuable information in respect to that. I read the account of the affair in the Watchman newspaper this morning, and saw the portrait of the murdered man there. In the case at first inclined to go to the Watchman office with my information, but I finally decided to approach the police instead of the press, regarding the police as being more responsible."

"Much obliged to you, sir," said Rathbury, with a glance at Spargo. "Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?"

"My name," replied the visitor, drawing out and laying down a card, "is Myerst—Mr. E. F. Myerst, secretary of the London and Universal Safe Deposit Co. I may, I suppose, speak with confidence," continued Mr. Myerst, with a side glance at Spargo. "My information is—confidential."

Rathbury inclined his head and put his fingers together. "You may speak with every confidence, Mr. Myerst," he answered. "If what you have to tell has any real bearing on the Marbury case, it will probably have to be repeated in public, you know, sir. But at present it will be treated as private."

"It has a very real bearing on the case, I should say," replied Mr. Myerst. "Yes, I should decidedly say so. The fact is that on June 21 at about—(to be precise, at 10 o'clock in the afternoon), a stranger, who gave the name of John Marbury, and his present address as the Anglo-Orient Hotel, Waterloo, called at our establishment, and asked if he could rent a small safe. He explained to me that he desired to deposit in such a safe a small leather box—which, by the way, was of remarkably ancient appearance—that he had brought with him. I showed him a safe such as he wanted, informed him of the cost, and of the rules of the place, and he engaged the safe, paid the rent for one year in advance, and deposited his leather box—an affair of about a foot square—there and then. After that, having exchanged a remark or two about the altered conditions of London, which I understood him to say, he had not seen for a great many years, he took his key and his departure. I think there can be no doubt about this being the Mr. Marbury who was found murdered."

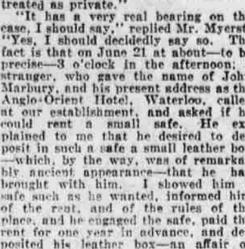
"None at all," I should say, Mr. Myerst," said Rathbury. "And I'm much obliged to you for coming here. Now you might tell me a little more, sir. Did Marbury tell you anything about the contents of the box?"

"No," he merely remarked that he would the greatest care to be taken of it," replied the secretary. "Didn't give you any hint as to what was in it?" asked Rathbury. "None. But he was very particular to assure himself that it could not be burnt, nor burgled, nor otherwise molested," replied Mr. Myerst. "He appeared to be greatly relieved when he found that it was impossible for anyone but himself to take his property from his safe."

"Ah!" said Rathbury, winking at Spargo. "So he would, no doubt, and Marbury himself, sir, now? How did he strike you?"

"Mr. Myerst gravely considered this question. "Mr. Marbury struck me," he answered at last, "as a man who had probably seen strange places. And before leaving he made, what I will term, a remarkable remark. About—in fact, about his leather box."

"Well, I guess I'll have to go to bed Sunday—I see my laundry is still laying around here—if I don't do everything myself there's nothing done."



LOOK AT THIS GROCERY BILL—MOVE OVER—MAKE ROOM FOR ONE MORE GUY IN THE POORHOUSE

THE GUMPS—Andy After a Heavy Breakfast

By Sidney Smith

WELL—I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO GO TO BED SUNDAY—I SEE MY LAUNDRY IS STILL LAYING AROUND HERE—IF I DON'T DO EVERYTHING MYSELF THERE'S NOTHING DONE



LOOK AT THIS GROCERY BILL—MOVE OVER—MAKE ROOM FOR ONE MORE GUY IN THE POORHOUSE



AND MRS GUMP—LISTEN—SOME DAY—IF YOU SHOULD FIND A LITTLE TIME—IF YOU DON'T WANT TO HURRY YOU—WOULD YOU KINDLY RUN A LITTLE YARN THROUGH THE END OF MY SOCKS—THEY LOOK LIKE SPATS—I CAN'T TELL WHICH END TO PUT MY FEET IN



OH—THAT MAN!



PETEY—The Blow That Floored the Hiccoughs

By C. A. Voight

—THE DOCTOR SAYS NOTHING BUT A SEVERE SHOCK WILL CURE UNCLE PETEY'S HICCUGHS



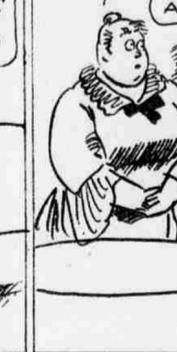
OH DEAR, LET US THINK UP SOME THING



—OH, UNCLE PETEY!! THIS IS TERRIBLE—AUNTIE HAS RUN OFF WITH THE PLUMBER!



—IT DIDN'T CURE HIM DID IT—?



—IT DIDN'T HAVE THE SLIGHTEST EFFECT—WE'D BETTER TELL HIM IT WAS A FAKE



—I DIDN'T RUN AWAY PETEY DEAR—WE MADE IT UP TO GIVE YOU A SHOCK!



—AND THE HICCUGHS STOPPED IMMEDIATELY



CHAPTER IX

The Dealer in Rare Stamps

"BURIED—and deep-down, too—"

"BURY—many and many a year," repeated Mr. Myerst, eyeing his companions with keen glances. "I consider that, gentlemen, a very remarkable remark—very remarkable."

Rathbury struck his thumbs in the armbolts of his waistcoat again and began swaying backward and forward in his chair. He looked at Spargo. And with his knowledge of men, he knew that all Spargo's journalistic instincts had been aroused, and that he was keen as mustard to be off on a new scent.

"Remarkable—remarkable, Mr. Myerst," he assented. "What do you say, Mr. Spargo?"

Spargo spoke. "I don't think I said anything," he replied. "Nothing that one might call material, you know."

"Oh, no—not at all," replied Myerst. "Spargo got up abruptly from his chair."

"Then you missed one of the finest opportunities I ever heard of!" he said, half-sneeringly. "You might have heard such a story—"

(CONTINUED MONDAY)

DREAMLAND ADVENTURES

THE GIANT OF MOVIELAND

By DADDY

(Peggy, Billy, the Giant of the Woods, their animal and bird friends take the place of a moving-picture troupe in making a photograph. Peggy is captured by Giant Fierce Fangs, but Billy rescues her.)

CHAPTER VI Fierce Fangs Goes Tumbling BILLY, with Peggy on his back, crept like a circus tightrope walker along the swaying lasso, stretched across the moat from the castle wall to a telephone pole on the opposite bank. Step by step he felt his way along. Near the center of the moat he swung back and forth, and Peggy thought they would surely tumble into the deep water beneath them.

To add to their peril, there broke upon the air a startling creaking and clanking. It was Giant Fierce Fangs letting down the drawbridge. It was to be a race across the moat. Billy tottered for a moment, then the lasso steadied his arms, he got back his balance, and fairly ran along the rope until he reached the telephone pole. With Peggy still clinging to his shoulders he slid to the ground, and looked anxiously around for a way to escape. As he looked he saw Bally Sam coming up over the edge of the moat. The mule was being boosted out of the ditch by the Giant of the Woods. Bally Sam had a hard struggle climbing up, but he gained the top just as the drawbridge banged into place, and Giant Fierce Fangs leaped upon it. Billy threw Peggy upon Bally Sam's back, vaulting quickly up behind her. Away went the mule, and away chased Bally Sam and Fierce Fangs. And after Giant Fierce Fangs raced Billy Goat and Johnny Bull, who were thrown out of the ditch by the Giant of the Woods.

It was a mad, mad chase. Bally Sam was swift of foot, but Giant Fierce Fangs was even swifter. The monster cowboy had long legs and he made them fairly fly in his eagerness to capture Peggy, his expected bride. Through the Charming City, back and forth among the houses, and then out toward the rocky hills, rushed Bally Sam, dodging this way and that. And right at his heels, stretching out a grasping hand, was Giant Fierce Fangs.

The Young Lady Across the Way

By Fontaine Fox

I'LL GET LEM AND HARRY AND YOU GO OVER AND GET JAKE



OH DEAR!

—AN' RECESS' 'LL BE OVER IN A FEW MINUTES.

WHEN ANYONE ELSE FALLS ON THE "SLIDE" IT'S A GREAT JOKE BUT WHEN AUNT EPIE FELL ON IT THE SLIDE WAS OUT OF COMMISSION UNTIL HALF A DOZEN MEN COULD BE BROUGHT OVER TO GET HER TO HER FEET.

The young lady across the way says the postoffice ought to seek the man, as Abraham Lincoln said.

Aunt Eppie Hogg, the Fattest Woman in Three Counties

By Fontaine Fox



SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG



SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER—Write Your Own Caption

Copyright, 1920, by Public Ledger Co.

By Hayward

LISTEN GIRLS! A FLOCK OF YOU HAVE BEEN WRITING IN ASKING US TO MARRY CAMILLE TO THE BOSS' SON, ETC. NOW, BE REASONABLE PLEASE! IF WE DID THAT THEN HOW COULD WE CONTINUE THE COMIC? THERE WOULD BE NO SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER, BUT—JUST TO PLEASE 'GRAY EYES' AND OTHERS WE WILL TRY HER MARRIED JUST FOR TODAY ONLY—LET'S SEE WHAT CAN BE DONE.



DOROTHY DARNIT—And Alonzo Comes After the Other Guy

Copyright, 1920, by the Bell Syndicate, Inc.

By Chas. McManus

