

THE MIDDLE TEMPLE MURDER

A Detective Story by J. S. Fletcher

Copyright, 1920, Fred A. Knapp, Inc. ... JUST so, but that feeling's a lot more to do with this mystery than you think, my young friend," said Myerst.

afraid of that fellow there—his safe enough. Tell Spargo and me what you know of the matter. Remember, Myerst, can't hurt Cardlestone, or Chamberlayne, or whoever he is or was, now."

A sudden sharp cry from the inner room interrupted Myerst. Breton and Spargo started to their feet and made for the door.

"I'm badly shaken," he said, "I've suffered much lately—I've learnt things that I didn't know. Perhaps I ought to have spoken before, but I was afraid for—him. He was a good friend, Cardlestone, whatever else he may have been—a good friend. And I don't know any more than what happened that night."

"He's gone!" he exclaimed in quivering accents. "My old friend's gone—dead! I was—awful, I was—awful and looked at him."

"Tell us what happened that night," said Breton.

"Well, that night I went round, as I often did, to play piquet with Cardlestone. That was about ten o'clock. About eleven Jane Baylis came to Cardlestone's—she'd been to my rooms to find me—wanted to see me particularly—and she'd come on there, knowing where I should be. Cardlestone would make her have a glass of wine and a biscuit; she sat down and we all talked about it."

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"Who had, then?" he said. "Who'd your tongue?" Myerst commanded Breton, turning angrily on him. He sat down by Elphick's side and laid his hand soothingly on the old man's arm.

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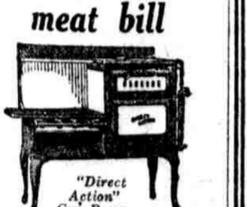
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he offered and gave him a drink. The man said Cardle had given him Cardlestone's address, and that he'd been with a friend at some rooms in Fountain Court, and as he was passing our building he'd just look to make sure where Cardlestone lived, and as he'd noticed a light he'd make bold to knock. He and Cardlestone began to examine the stamps. Jane Baylis said, good-night, and she and I left Cardlestone and the man together."

"No one had recognized him?" said Breton.

"No one! Remember, I only once or twice saw Maitland in all my life. The others certainly did not recognize him. At least, I never knew that they did."

"Tell us," said Spargo, joining in for the first time. "Tell us what you and Miss Baylis did?"

"At the foot of the stairs Jane Baylis suddenly said she'd forgotten something in Cardlestone's lobby. As she was going out into Fleet Street, and I was going down Middle Temple Lane to turn off to my own rooms, we said good-night. She went back upstairs, and I went home. And upon my soul and honor that's all I know."

Spargo suddenly leaped to his feet. He snatched at his cap—a sudden and bedraggled headgear, which he had thrown down when they entered the cottage.

"That's enough!" he almost shouted. "I've got it—at last! Breton—where's the nearest telegraph office? Hawes? Straight down this valley? Then, here's for it! Look after things till I'm back, or, when the police come, join me there. I shall catch the first train to town, anyhow, after wiring."

"But—what are you after, Spargo?" exclaimed Breton. "Stop! What on earth—"

But Spargo had closed the door and was running for all he was worth down the valley. Three quarters of an hour later he started a quiet and peaceful telegrapher by darting, breathless and dirty, into a sleepy country postoffice, snatching a telegraph form and scribbling down a message in shaky handwriting.

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Tomorrow! Tomorrow!

der of John Maitland. Coming straight to town with full evidence.

Frank Spargo. Then Spargo dropped on the office bench, and while the wondering operator set the wires ticking, strove to get his breath, utterly spent in his mad race across the heather. And when it was got he set out again—to find the station.

Some days later, Spargo, having seen Stephen Aylmore walk out of the Bow Street dock, cleared of the charge against him, and in a fair way of being cleared of the affair of twenty years before, found himself in a very quiet corner of the court holding the hand of Jessie Aylmore, who, he discovered, was saying things to him which he scarcely comprehended.

"I don't want thanks," he said. "It was all a lot of luck. And if I come today—it will be to see—just you!"

Jessie Aylmore looked down at the two hands.

"I think," she whispered, "I think that is what I really meant!"

THE END

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