

KILLING NO MURDER

By H. M. Egbert

Lawrence Preston, murderer, occupies a good position in the social world of his native town. He is vice president of the board of trade, a respected business man, a good citizen and has an adoring wife and children. He goes to church on Sundays and walks home with clean conscience.

Is murder justifiable? Preston had loved Dorothy for years before Rankin appeared upon the scene, with his flashy ways and tales of wanderings and adventures. He was just the type of man who would captivate the heart of an inexperienced girl like Dorothy. Preston, to whom she was more than half engaged, saw her slipping away from him.

Dorothy married Rankin, and then ensued five of the bitterest years of her life. He took her money and spent it, partly gambling, partly on other women. Dorothy ought to have divorced him, perhaps, but she shrank from that step; nothing like it had been known in her family, and, while she was still deliberating, Rankin was killed in the train accident that occurred after the Watertown races where he had gone to play.

The body was mangled among a heap of others and only identified by a card in a card case. It occurred to nobody that Rankin might have given his card to some chance acquaintance upon the train. Dorothy did not pretend to mourn for him. Six months later she married Preston and her real honeymoon began.

Two years of ideal happiness passed. Preston was at this time representing his firm on the road. He was away for a week when Dorothy, seated happily on the porch of their house, and thinking of him, saw a ragged tramp approaching along the road.

Something in the man's appearance, in his slouching gait, arrested her attention. Suddenly she sat up in her chair, rigid, her eyes fixed with horror upon the face of the man who had been her husband.

Rankin advanced up the little walk of the garden. He grinned amiably as he came to a halt in front of the terrified girl and removed his battered hat with a mock bow.

"Well, wife," he said, "is that all you have to say to me? Aren't you



He Saw the Terror in the Black-mailer's Eyes.

glad to see me again after all these years?"

Dorothy only shrank from him. Rankin observed the movement and he grinned, not so amiably as before.

"I guess we'd better have this thing out right away," he said, taking his seat beside her. "So you thought I was dead and got married again, eh? And I guess you're happier than you were with me? And you wouldn't like to be disgraced and have to take me back?"

"I'll never do that!" cried Dorothy,