

# Behind the Bolted Door?

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Illustration by Henry Raleigh

**H**OW was Mrs. Fisher murdered, and by whom? For the first correct solution of this mystery, submitted in accordance with the announcement at the end of this instalment, we will pay \$500.

## The Characters:

JUDGE BISHOP, Mrs. Fisher's lawyer.  
DOCTOR LANEHAM, her physician.  
MISS DAPHNE HOPE, a lawyer in the Judge's office.  
MR. WALTER WILLINGS, a settlement worker and friend of Miss Hope.  
MCGLOYNE, Chief of Detectives.

DR. LANEHAM and Judge Bishop, going to Mrs. Fisher's apartment together, are admitted by Jimmy, her Cockney butler. Mrs. Fisher, rich and benevolently inclined, has a fancy for giving ex-convicts a chance in her service; and both Jimmy and Maddalina, the Italian maid, are known to have "done time." Jimmy goes to announce them, but, instead of returning, packs a grip and mysteriously flees the house. The two men are left alone in the gathering darkness of the big living-room: they grow restless, and finally, calling Mrs. Fisher's name and receiving no response, seek to force an entrance into her private suite. They reach the first door, and instantly, as their fingers touch it, the lock is turned on the inside. They try a second door, with the same result, and a third. Obviously some one is inside, but who? They hear footsteps, accompanied by an uncanny knocking on the woodwork. And a voice, as if in utter agony, crying "My God, my God!" Hall-boys and neighbors rush in; they burst down the door. Not a sound is heard, but, lying beside the swimming-pool which she had built into the apartment, is the dead body of Mrs. Fisher. No one is in the apartment, yet there is no way in which any one could have escaped from it. Every door is bolted; every window locked.

Mrs. Fisher was known to have certain azure pearls of great value in her rooms. Was it for these she was murdered? If so, how was the murder committed, and by whom?

Dr. Laneham agrees, with the help of Miss Hope and young Willings, to take up the case. One of the scientific theories on which he proceeds is the discovery of Professor Zaneray that in every murder case the close friends of the victim invariably "hold out" some information. He explains the theory to Judge Bishop, Miss Hope, and Willings; and the look on their faces—the famous "Zaneray look"—betrays the fact that each one of them is holding out something. But each protests that what he is holding out is unimportant.

Meanwhile, Jimmy is missing; Maddalina is missing; McGloyne, the Chief of Detectives, has made no progress except to suspect Willings, who had called at Mrs. Fisher's apartment that afternoon. And Dr. Laneham discovered nothing except a "murder note" lying on Mrs. Fisher's desk and a few charred bits of paper in one of the Fisher fireplaces. Who, then, murdered Mrs. Fisher?

**I**T was characteristic of Laneham that before he slept that night he had already arranged, so far as was humanly possible, to free himself of all professional duties for the next ten days. Fortunately, he could turn things over to McMaster, of his Hartsdale sanatorium, with an almost easy mind.

It was no less characteristic of him that, before he had risen next morning, he had already begun to arrange

and classify the ghastly data of the night before as if for a hospital record. A pad and pencil lay on his dressing-table, and, as he went to and fro, from time to time he made a jotting. Who had killed Mrs. Fisher? In the end his pad showed roughly this:

(A) *Facts apparently explicable, and criminal in the ordinary sense.*

1. Body found by Judge Bishop, self, and others at about 5:15, in Mrs. Fisher's private suite, near swimming-pool. Death had taken place some two hours previously.
2. Italian maid, Maddalina—prison record—had already fled.
3. English butler, Jimmy—also prison record—shows great nervousness, and flees after admitting self and Bishop to reception-room.
4. Blank paper had been substituted for genuine notes in bank envelop left by Mrs. Fisher for young Willings.
5. Some one was attempting to break into

small wall safe, in Mrs. Fisher's rooms, containing pearls, even after Judge and self had begun to attempt to gain entrance to same rooms. The Electric Protection Company had an alarm at the very time we were trying to force the door.

(B) *Facts apparently inexplicable, and, on the surface, more than natural.*

1. All doors of Mrs. Fisher's private suite locked on inside—no access by windows—and last doors were locked from inside even as Judge touched their handles to open them.
2. Following this a thrice-repeated sound of rapping or knocking heard from within, and a voice crying in great spiritual agony: "Oh, my God, my God!" Voice extremely deep and broken. (Same rapping or knocking also heard an hour earlier by Willings.)
3. Cause of death not apparent—bruises and markings on arms and throat, and temple crushed in—weapon, if any, gone.
4. Though murderer (?) was still plainly in rooms on arrival of Judge Bishop and self, and all doors and windows were locked, upon

our entrance he had disappeared, and as yet all attempts to discover his method of escape have been unavailing.

And then, as a final note, he had written:

For the present, disregard all the seemingly supernatural absolutely. Begin by making every attempt to find Jimmy, the butler.

**B**Y the time he had finished his memorandum sounds below told him that Miss Hope and Willings, his two "special deputies," had arrived. He heard Jacobs, his man, and Mrs. Neilson, his housekeeper, installing them. Number 390 was a big, well appointed house. There was no good reason why they should not be at least physically at ease.

He met them on the stairs, and led them over side by side and sat them down on the big leather window-seat.

"Well, you're here. And you've forgotten me that Zaneray stuff?"

"I guess so," said D. Hope.

"I knew you would. And how do your settlement people take it that you're going to leave them and move up here with me?"

"They knew it was better for us to leave—for a while, at least. And then, they know you, too."

"Thank you. And the pater?"

"He's in Japan somewhere," Miss Hope replied. "They all are. And they won't hear of it for another month."

"Which, I should say, is just as well!"

Both of the young people looked very quiet and businesslike. The girl, deep-breasted, supple, free of limb, was almost the larger. But Willings' big round glasses were accompanied by any amount of clean, tanned sinew; and, with the humor in his face, there was all the pluck and spirit needed.

"The first thing," said the Doctor, speaking first to him, "is, how far are we to let the lady go in this?"

"Why," she asked, "what do you mean?"

"Simply this. Part, at least, of what's ahead is likely to be the old business of bad men in this city of adventures. And, after all, you are a woman, you know."

"Now, Doctor, listen." One thing D. Hope possessed was a faculty for looking straight at people and speaking in the same way. And she spoke so now. "I settled all that forever the first week I was down in Hudson Street, when I got into one of those West Side gang fights we have down there. I didn't know what it was at first. All I saw was a young fellow come bursting out of a crowd. I thought he was wearing a big red neck-tie. But it wasn't a neck-tie. And two others were after him, and more behind, yelling at them to 'make it a job.' He ran into a store—a delicatessen shop. Of course, like any girl if she lets herself, I began telling myself that I must get away—that I mustn't even dream of interfering. And then I thought: 'Yes, and isn't that just exactly why we've always been an inferior sex—and we have been! And if I could do anything at all, even the littlest thing!'"

"I'll tell the rest," said Willings. "When I came along, I found her standing in the door of that delicatessen store, with the biggest ham knife. And if any of those tough guys had really tried to pass!"

"All right!" said Laneham. "I surrender. Say no more. And I'll tell you now what I want you to do first."

**W**HEN Judge Bishop arrived, he was just finishing:

"There were only a few charred bits of paper. I picked them out of one of the grates up there at the



"The little butler was trying to fight them off. 'Let me die, I tell you! Let me die! Ain't it no proof to you that—that I'm 'ere to die?'"

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