

# The DIVORCE COURT MURDER

By MILTON PROPPER

## FOURTEENTH INSTALMENT

When there was the fact that Ellen and Garrett had only a small fraction of the stolen goods," said the nurse who had attended the former Mrs. Keith. "After she was here six months, Ellen realized I sympathized with her, and once permitted herself to confide in me. When I asked how she got into this trouble, she didn't try to justify herself, but only Garrett. He wasn't naturally bad, she claimed, and she did her best to stop him from going wrong. But he admired his friend's smartness and his influence, and the temptation of easy money was too much for him. I could tell she clearly feared and despised the fellow."

Rankin spoke eagerly. "Did she tell you anything about who he was and what became of him?"

"She could hardly know what happened to him after her arrest." The matron shook her head. "But she mentioned the name by which she knew him; more than likely it was an alias. If I'm not mistaken, he traveled as Fred Dennis."

But the matron had no idea of her charge's history, once she passed beyond the walls of the penitentiary. She had never heard from her. Nor could she supply any further details about Fred Dennis, or his description, which Rankin particularly desired. And she was ignorant of how Ellen Trent met her lover or where, in court, she had been represented by a Mr. Nathan Lewis, a Fort Wayne lawyer, in all probability appointed by the judge to defend her, because she had no money.

Late that afternoon, Tommy Rankin presented himself by appointment made over the telephone, at the law office of Mr. Nathan Lewis. Evidently the lawyer had prospered since the day, six years before, when he was appointed by the court, an impetuous young lawyer, to defend Ellen Trent.

Mr. Lewis studied Rankin's card and motioned him to a deep arm chair.

"Yes, Mr. Rankin?" he inquired politely, but with quiet reserve. "You're from the Philadelphia Police Bureau, I see. How can I be of service to you?"

"I called you to make sure you wouldn't leave the office before I arrived," the detective replied. "It's about a young woman whose mysterious murder I am investigating in the East. Her name is Barbara Keith and she was once your client, charged with concealing and disposing of stolen goods. You knew her as Ellen Trent."

The lawyer looked genuinely shocked, and shook his head solemnly.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he murmured. "Of course, I recall the case quite well. Exactly what happened to her?"

Briefly Rankin related enough of the tragedy to enlist Mr. Lewis' cooperation. The latter listened attentively.

"I have reason to believe," Rankin concluded, "that this affair in Fort Wayne—her arrest and imprisonment—has a bearing on her death. She was being blackmailed by some one familiar with her past. And you can probably tell me more about it, from her angle, than anyone else."

Mr. Lewis pondered. "Under these circumstances, I suppose I am justified in revealing whatever I can to help you. To me, it has always seemed a most distressing situation, for which the girl was not to blame at all. Her misfortune was to love a ne'er-do-well. Yet, there were the goods, the evidence that she knew of the robberies, and her obvious relations with one of the men. I considered it most wise that she plead guilty and trusted to the court's leniency for a minimum sentence."

"That's one of the details I want," the detective cut in quickly. "It's been suggested to me, from other sources, that she was really quite innocent."

"I'm firmly convinced of that," Mr. Lewis declared. "At our first interview in the city jail, she assured me she was ignorant of Garrett's dishonesty until after they had lived here for six months. At times she wondered why he stayed out so late at night. She found out about him eventually when he returned at dawn, after a narrow escape during an attempted robbery. He had been separated from Dennis and brought back some of the loot; then she realized his occupation and taxed him with it."

"And what's your opinion of Garrett? Did you gather he was vicious or just weak?"

The lawyer spread his hands. "Miss Trent insisted it was entirely Dennis' fault, without his persuasion and the enticement of easy money. Garrett would never have gone wrong. She loved him so, it was almost pitiful how she deluded herself about his worthiness."

"Have you any idea, Mr. Lewis," he asked, "how and where she met Garrett in the first place?"

After some cogitation, the attorney recalled that the girl had mentioned that they became acquainted in Akron, Ohio, late in 1925. She worked as a wrapper in a large department store there and met the young man at a dance hall. Mr. Lewis was not better informed than Mortimer Keith had been. She had no relatives left, he believed.

The lawyer told how her sweetheart became acquainted with Fred Dennis. It was at the Indianapolis race track, where Garrett began to hang about when he failed to obtain work, in hope of acquiring some loose change. But the girl could not name, Mr. Lewis explained as Rankin probed more thoroughly, any of Dennis' other associates.

"No wonder she detested Dennis so," Rankin exclaimed. "He threatened her happiness, endangered the man she loved and brought her endless worry and anxiety for his welfare."

"Exactly," Mr. Lewis agreed. "That's the reason when Garrett was killed, she considered him his murderer. I have a vivid picture of her death; she didn't care what happened in prison, crushed and number by his to her without him. But she had one interest—a prim determination that Fred Dennis should suffer for it."

The detective nodded. "I suppose he realized her opposition and enmity."

"He could hardly help it, the way she always tried to persuade Garrett to break away. It was a continual struggle for ascendancy over him; she told me that when she'd almost won him away, Dennis could bring him back to heel with word."

"But the police didn't catch him, even with her information?" Rankin vouchsafed.

Mr. Lewis toyed with a pen on his desk and pushed back his chair as he replied.

"No, he escaped again," he related, "by the skin of his teeth, just before they broke in."

"And nothing was heard of him afterwards?" No trace of his whereabouts?

The lawyer shook his head. "No, he dropped completely out of the picture."

"But at least you have Miss Trent's descriptions of him," the detective put in.

"The police could give you that," Mr. Lewis replied. "It was their job to hunt him. And I believe they still hunt such of Dennis' possessions as didn't have other rightful owners."

"In that case, I'd want to see them on the mat once." Abruptly, Rankin rose and extended his hand.

But instead of shaking hands, Mr. Lewis glanced at his watch and also rose.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Rankin," he said, "I'd like to go along with you to Headquarters. Recalling how favorably the girl impressed me, I'm interested in the case and wish to learn what develops. In fact, if Dennis is responsible for her murder, I feel almost involved in it myself."

"Why, certainly, Mr. Lewis," the detective returned pleasantly. "You're quite welcome to join me and follow it up."

The lawyer had put into words the possibility to which his investigations and all the information he obtained on this journey pointed. Certainly, Fred Dennis had ample reason for harboring malice against Ellen Trent and desiring her death. From the beginning, her opposition to his control over her sweetheart, Garrett, constantly threatened to disrupt his plans and endanger his criminal enterprises. Then, with Dave Garrett's death, her more active hostility resulted calamitously for him. She made him a fugitive from justice. It was hardly likely that a man of his character, vicious and revengeful, yet astute and daring, would hesitate to commit murder in retaliation.

He was familiar with Barbara Keith's past and in a position to disclose it; and as part of his revenge, he could blackmail her by anonymously calling her husband's attention to them, he would establish her relations with Garrett and her prison sentence as a thief. He might even have been aware of the expected baby. To

silence him, Mrs. Keith would undoubtedly have been willing to pay dearly.

Why, then, had he chosen to chloroform her during the divorce hearing? And how had he reached her there? To these obstacles to his theory of Dennis' guilt, Rankin had to produce a solution. So long as Mrs. Keith continued to pay him, he would hesitate to kill the goose that laid such golden eggs; and she had given him a check as recently as June first. But there was a limit to the bleeding process. If driven to the wall by his demands, she might have turned on him finally, threatening both to betray him to the authorities and to admit the truth to her husband. The fact that the day before she died she had furnished a subject, the delicacy and importance of which her nervousness and alarm attested, supported this supposition. Instead of wishing to speak of a divorce, as Mr. Keith supposed, she may have intended to confess. Though she lost her nerve in the crisis, yet desperate and wounded, she constituted a fresh menace to Dennis.

And always, so long as she lived, her knowledge of his criminal career, which she could pass on to the authorities, endangered his freedom.

Mr. Lewis drove the detective direct to Headquarters. It was his presence rather than Rankin's official cards that gained them a prompt audience with Lieutenant Becker.

He was the officer who had arrested Ellen Trent six years before, and led the subsequent raid on Dennis' flat. Even now he was sensitive about that fiasco and mention of it brought a wry frown to his features. Rankin briefly related the story of Barbara Keith's murder and the trail that led to Fort Wayne. When he explained its connection with Fred Dennis and his desire to obtain information about him, Lieutenant Becker nodded.

"Of course, we still have all the things from his apartment," he declared, "that is, personal things. I'll have them in a jiffy."

He summoned a policeman from the record room. Within ten minutes the officer returned with papers, reports and several suitcases.

Continued Next Week

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## NOTICES OF SERVICE OF SUMMONS

On defendants specially named below in tax foreclosure suits for Watauga County, North Carolina:

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County Plaintiff vs. Mrs. Chas. Lambeth and Husband, Mr. Chas. Lambeth, Defendants. Defendants Mrs. Chas. Lambeth and husband, Mr. Chas. Lambeth, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lots Nos. 6, 7, 8, & 9 in Block "D", Subdivision of the Blowing Rock Development Co., Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1928, of record in Deed Book 22, page 140, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of Mrs. Chas. Lambeth.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. H. W. Harris and wife, Mrs. H. W. Harris, Defendants.

Defendant H. W. Harris and wife, Mrs. H. W. Harris, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Encroachment of lands adjoining the Caldwell and Watauga Turnpike, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1929, 1930, 1931, & 1932, of record in Deed Book 30, page 5, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of H. W. Harris.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. Thomas Gemmel and wife, Mrs. Thomas Gemmel, John Fox and The American Trust Company, Defendants.

Defendants Thomas Gemmel and wife, Mrs. Thomas Gemmel, John Fox and The American Trust Company, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure of lots Nos. 83 & 84, in Mayview Park, Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1927 & 1932, of record in Plat Book 25, page 163 & Deed Book 27, pages 527 & 530, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of Thomas Gemmel.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga county, Plaintiff vs. Forrest Eskridge and wife, Mrs. Eskridge, Defendants.

Defendants Forrest Eskridge and wife, Mrs. Eskridge see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lot No. 89 as shown in the Mayview Manor property, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1927, of record in Deed Book 25, page 163, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of Forrest Eskridge.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. J. Carl Wolfe and wife, Mrs. J. C. Wolfe, C. A. Critcher and wife, Mrs. C. A. Critcher, Defendants.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lot No. 58, in Mayview Park, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1929, of record in Deed Book 37, page 373, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of J. Carl Wolfe.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. M. W. Dixon and wife, Mrs. M. W. Dixon, David J. Craig and wife, Mrs. David J. Craig, Defendants.

Defendants M. W. Dixon and wife, Mrs. M. W. Dixon, David J. Craig and wife, Mrs. David J. Craig, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure of lots 11 & 12 in Block "C" in Subdivision No. 2 of the Blowing Rock Development Company, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1930, of record in Deed Book 32, page 27, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of M. W. Dixon.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. A. W. Dula, Estate, Defendants.

Defendant Mr. A. W. Dula, estate see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure of tract of land containing 7 acres, more or less, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1925, of record in Deed Book 34, page 270, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of A. W. Dula, estate.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. J. M. Deaton and wife, Mrs. J. M. Deaton, J. A. Deaton and wife, Mrs. J. A. Deaton, Defendants.

Defendants J. M. Deaton and wife, Mrs. J. M. Deaton, J. A. Deaton and wife, Mrs. J. A. Deaton, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure of lots Nos. 18, 19, 20, & 21 in Block "E" of the A. S. Abernethy Subdivision, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1931 & 1932, of record in Deed Book 38, page 108, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of J. M. Deaton.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. E. T. Beatty and wife, Mrs. E. T. Beatty, Defendants.

Defendants E. T. Beatty and wife, Mrs. E. T. Beatty see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on tract of land bounded on the east by W. A. Merchant; on the south by Ranson Street; on the west by Merchant; and on the north by Merchant; and conveyed to said E. T. Beatty, and conveyed to said E. T. Beatty, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1927, 1928, 1930, 1931, & 1932, of record in Deed Book 24, page 238, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of E. T. Beatty.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff, vs. George Burnett and wife, Blanche L. Burnett, R. L. Greene, G. T. Burnett Jr., T. T. Home, Trustee, and John H. Daniel, and Town of Blowing Rock, Leinholder, Defendants.

Defendants George Burnett and

wife, Blanche L. Burnett, R. L. Greene, G. T. Burnett Jr., T. T. Home, Trustee, and John H. Daniel, and Town of Blowing Rock, Leinholder, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lots Nos. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, & 17 Block "E" of the A. S. Abernethy property, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1929, 1930, 1931 & 1932, of record in Deed Book 36, page 21, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in name of George Burnett.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. F. A. Earnest & Wife, Mrs. F. A. Earnest, Defendants.

Defendant F. A. Earnest and wife, Mrs. F. A. Earnest see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure of tract of land containing 595 acres, more or less, in Bald Mt. T. S., for unpaid County taxes for the years 1928, 1929, 1930, 1931, & 1932, of record in Deed Book 21, page 59, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in name of F. A. Earnest.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. June Page & Husband, Defendants.

Defendants June Page and husband see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure of lots Nos. 8, 9, 10, & 11, in Block "G", Subdivision No. 2 of the Blowing Rock Development Co., in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1929, 1930, 1931, & 1932, of record in Deed Book 334, page 552, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of June Page.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. J. H. Linebarger and wife, Mrs. J. H. Linebarger, Defendants.

Defendants J. H. Linebarger and wife, Mrs. J. H. Linebarger see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lots Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, & 13, in Block "A" Subdivision No. 2 of the Blowing Rock Development Co. in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1928, 1931, & 1932 of record in Deed Book 32, page 106, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of J. H. Linebarger.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. O. O. Orvis and wife, Mrs. A. O. Orvis, Homer W. Orvis and wife, Mrs. Homer W. Orvis, Defendants.

Defendants A. O. Orvis and wife, Mrs. A. O. Orvis, and Homer W. Orvis and wife, Mrs. Homer W. Orvis, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lots Nos. 1, 70, 71 & 72, of the Mayview Manor Division, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1932, of record in Deed Book 40, page 199, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of A. O. Orvis.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. T. H. Coffey & J. H. Deal, Admrs. of Estate of W. L. Alexander, G. M. Suddreth, G. E. Bryan and J. W. Whisnand, Trustee, Defendants.

Defendants J. H. Deal, admr. of estate of W. L. Alexander, G. E. Bryan and J. W. Whisnand, trustee, see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on the Mayview Manor property in Blowing Rock, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the year 1928, of record in Deed Book 36, page 640, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in name of T. H. Coffey.

### NOTICE OF SERVICE

Watauga County, Plaintiff vs. J. M. Deaton & Sons, Defendants.

Defendant J. M. Deaton & Sons see notice hereafter set out.

Subject matter of the above action: Foreclosure on lots Nos. 7 & 8, in the R. L. Fox Subdivision, in Blowing Rock T. S., for unpaid county taxes for the years 1931 & 1932, of record in Deed Book 39, page 279, in the Registry of Watauga county. Listed in the name of J. M. Deaton. (Continued on Page 7)

### EXECUTOR'S NOTICE

Having qualified as executors of the will of Jethro Wilson, late of Watauga county North Carolina, this is to notify all persons having claims against the estate of the said deceased to present them to us for payment within twelve months of the date of this notice or the same shall be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to the estate will please make immediate payment. This November 2, 1935. GEORGE ROBINSON RALEIGH WILSON, Executors, Will of Jethro Wilson, Deceased. 11-7-6p



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## NOTICE OF SALE OF REAL ESTATE

By virtue of an execution issued to the undersigned sheriff of Watauga County, North Carolina, in that certain action entitled "W. H. Shull vs. Walter L. Ward," on the 21st day of October, 1935, I will, on Monday, December 2, 1935, at 1 o'clock P. M., at the courthouse door of Watauga County, at Boone, N. C., to satisfy said execution, sell to the highest bidder for cash the following described real estate, to-wit:

Lying and being in Laurel Creek Township, Watauga County, North Carolina, adjoining the lands of W. F. Winkler and L. D. Teaster and others, and begins on a spruce pine in Winkler's line and runs 150 feet with Winkler's line to the turnpike road; thence down and with said road 140 feet to a stake; thence a S. course 45 feet to the Beech Road; thence an E. course 43 feet to a chestnut tree; thence a S. course 60 feet to the beginning, and contains 1-5 of an acre, more or less, and it being the same lot as appears of record in the Register's office of Watauga County in Book 35 of Deeds, at Page 376, to which reference is hereby made.

This the 2nd day of November, 1935.

A. Y. HOWELL,  
Sheriff of Watauga County.

11-7-6p

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