The Divorce Court Murder

by MILTON PROPPER

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THIRD INSTALLMENT

SYNOPSIS— Six persons are in an inner office of the law firm of Dawson, McQuire and Locke at Philadelphiaa. A master hearing in the divorce case of Rowland vs. Rowland is under way, Mrs. Rowland, represented by her lawyer brother, Mr. Willard; Mr. Rowland, the defendant, and his attorney, Mr. Trumbull; the court clerk and Mr. Dawson, the master, are the six persons. there is a new development in the case. After failing to defend himself against the charge of adultery in earlier hearings, Mr. Rowland digs up evidence and asks the court's permission to produce witnesses and resist the suit. Judge Dawson overrules the heated objections of Mr. Willard, and orders the witnesses brought in. Rowland's lawyer goes to get the witness but finds her dead—chloroformed. She is Mrs. Barbara Keith, wife of a prominent Philadelphia business man. Judge Dawson phoned the police. Detective Tommy Rankin is assigned to the case. He is now questioning all of the parties involved in the case. Now go on with the story.

Rankin looked at his watch. "And now it's four-thirty," he observed, returning it. "That places the murder in the half hour between two-thirty and three o'clock."

He strode to the door opening into the main office and beckoned his assistant.

"Phone Headquarters, Jenks," he instructed, "and have Dr. Sackett sent over immediately. Tell them I want Johnson along also to look around with his fingerprint apparatus; and a couple of photographers as well."

When the detective left to carry out his instructions, Rankin returned to the lawyer.

"Now, Mr. Dawson, I should like to have a brief summary of the situation at your meeting here today. At what time did it begin, what developed and who are the parties involved?"

"I am the master," Mr. Dawson explained, "I listen to both sides of the case and recommend my decision to the court. I was appointed by Judge Finley."

Rankin was sufficiently familiar with the peculiar divorce law of his state to comprehend. In Pennsylvania, the proceedings were generally private, instead of being held in open court before a judge and jury. Some members of the bar, called a "master," was assigned by a justice to listen to the facts of the complaint, and present his findings to him; the court usually followed his recommendation, whether for or against the granting of the divorce.

"Who is suing?" was Rankin's next question. "Is the husband the plaintiff?"

"No, the wife, Mrs. Adele Rowland, brought the libel in this instance. Mr. Allen Rowland, is termed the respondent. Mrs. Rowland asks a divorce a vinculum matrimonium, that is, from the bonds of matrimony. And she is represented by her brother, Harvey Willard of Willard and Hanley."

The detective nodded to indicate some familiarity with the names mentioned.

"Mrs. Allen Rowland, eh? On what grounds does she demand the separation?"

"Adultery, Mr. Rankin," the lawyer answered. "She accuses him—and, I must admit, has thoroughly established her claim—of an intrigue with Miss Jill Edmond, the correspondent. Miss Edmond was recently Mrs. Rowland's social secretary."

Rankin mentally noted that by its very nature this particular suit for divorce might violate public good taste and must be contested behind closed doors.

He recalled having read in the newspapers when Mrs. Rowland first instituted suit. For the former Adele Willard was a member of a socially prominent Philadelphia family and her wealth and beauty made her marital adventures the subject of press comment and headlines. She was the daughter of the late Peter Willard, who years before had accumulated a fortune in real estate. At his death, she and her brother inherited an estate of well over a million dollars. Once before, she had married—Tom Marshall, a clubman, whose early death in a motor accident added to her fortune. The papers, the detective remembered, described her suit as a "love match on the rocks." Especially was gossip rife and the public interested, because her second husband, Allen Rowland, was totally without social prestige or distinction or money. In fact, he had been a riding master or some similar romantic underling when Mrs. Marshall, as a gay young widow, scandalized society by suddenly eloping with him about four and a half years before.

"I saw a reference to Mrs. Rowland's suit in the papers, Mr. Dawson. But that was early in April; have you been holding meetings ever since?"

"Practically," the lawyer returned. "That, since April twenty-sixth. This is the sixth hearing; they have continued every Wednesday, except last week, which was skipped to permit the respondent to petition the court for leave to introduce unexpected new evidence at the session against the granting of a divorce."

The detective frowned, not comprehending. "Unexpected, fresh evidence. Exactly what do you mean? What was Mr. Rowland's evidence before that?

"He offered no defense whatever, Mr. Rankin. Up to two weeks ago, he was represented at the hearings and attended himself, but made no attempt to contest the suit. And then, on Thursday, May twenty-fifth, the day following our last meeting, his lawyer, Mr. Trumbull, notified Mr. Willard that he intended to enter a positive defense to bar the suit. He claimed it was based on newly discovered events, which had just occurred, and so could not have been presented earlier."

"And the nature of this defense?" Rankin inquired quickly.

"As I understand, also adultery," Mr. Dawson related. "Of course, since this tragedy prevented the introduction of testimony, I don't know the details. But in effect, Mr. Rowland offered to prove, through Mrs. Keith, that since his wife brought action she has had the same sort of illicit relations—with some one he doesn't name—as those of which she accuses him."

Mr. Simpkins cleared his however," he interposed hesitantly, "that Mrs. Rowland's . . . ahem . . . alleged paramour was subpoenaed to be here today."

The detective's frown deepened, creasing his forehead with furrowed lines.

"Would such an answer, if true, bar Mrs. Rowland's suit?" he asked. "Would it effectively prevent the granting of a decree, according to law?"

"Yes, altogether." The lawyer smiled at his perplexity. "I realize how absurd it sounds that, when both parties have been unfaithful and no longer love each other they shouldn't be allowed to separate, but the legal theory of the law is that the state is also an interested party in every marriage. It does not favor divorces and grants them only as a privilege, when the parties deserve one. The one seeking it must come into court with clean hands; his or her conjugal conduct must be exemplary and without any offense like that complained of."

"Then Mrs. Keith was a very important witness for Mr. Rowland, wasn't she?"

"Undoubtedly, if she really could establish, as he claimed, the guilty relations of his wife and her lover. Especially, I believe, as he is the only other witness, and his testimony is likely to be biased. But with hers, I should certainly have advised the court that Mrs. Rowland be refused a decree."

"Well, what can you tell me about Mrs. Keith? Who is she, Mr. Dawson? How is she connected with the parties in the case?"

The lawyer shrugged. "I know nothing whatever about her. As I said, she had not yet testified. I came direct from court this afternoon to the hearing, and didn't see her until Mr. Trumbull summoned us into that office."

"Mrs. Rowland appears to have been acquainted with her," the clerk again spoke up, "and most unfriendly."

Rankin turned quickly to Mr. Dawson. "Is that so? What reason did he give?"

"He stated that some antagonism existed between them," Mr. Dawson explained, "which he feared would prejudice her against his sister. He suggested that she might evade the actual truth. Mr. Trumbull's answer to that was that she was a prominent member of Philadelphia society and could be trusted."

"But you've no idea what the trouble was—why they were at odds?"

The lawyer replied negatively, and a few more shrewd questions speedily showed Rankin that he could add no further pertinent facts at the moment.

On concluding his interrogation on these points, the detective turned to the communicating entrance.

"I suppose I can obtain from the others all the information about her I need," he said, "but that will have to wait now. I think, before I go any further, I'll take a look at the body."

Hardly knowing what to anticipate in the adjoining room, he was both shocked and surprised at the youth and beauty of the victim.

She was expensively but simply dressed in a plain, blue ensemble. Her only jewelry was a plain gold wedding ring on her left hand.

Faintly and only because he sought it, Rankin caught the aromatic, sweetish odor of chloroform in the office.

Dr. Clark bent over the still form to point out the marks of which he had spoken.

"Here you see, Mr. Rankin," he stated, "where the murderer held her while he pressed the chloroform pad to her nose."

The detective confirmed his examination. "So it seems," he agreed.

His gaze wandered to the windows in the right wall, partially open and with drawn curtains, and he crossed to them. Looking out he could see into another building, still taller, honeycombed with windows.

"It's lucky for the criminal," he commented, "that these windows had curtains."

He turned away and rejoined Mr. Dawson beside the body.

"How is it Mrs. Keith waited in here for her summons? Don't your visitors usually remain beyond the rail in the outside office until called?"

Mr. Dawson nodded. "Yes, it's the phone operator's place to inquire into their business and have them take seats there. But that applies ordinarily only to strangers. Since these hearings, Mr. Trumbull has had free access to the library; he may have had some reason for bringing her here."

"I'll have to question him about it," Rankin remarked and turned to the doctor. "Have you moved the body, Dr. Clark, or did it lie this way when you arrived?"

"I did not disturb it for my examination," the physician answered.

The detective indicated the door to 1505, that led into the corridor.

"Then if she was killed here, and that door is locked, it simplifies matters. At least, it limits the criminal to some one arriving through fifteen-o-seven and to employees and members of the firm."

"That door is never used and is always bolted, Mr. Rankin," Mr. Dawson stated. "It requires a separate key from the other two entrances. Without a key, no one could possibly open it from the hall."

"Unless it was already unlatched from the inside," Rankin contradicted.

Halfway to the door, he paused to draw a handkerchief from his pocket. Careful not to grasp the knob, he wrapped the handkerchief gingerly about the stem and exerted pressure. It turned and the door opened.

(Continued next week)

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If you feel sour and sunk and the world looks punk, don't swallow a lot of salts, mineral water, oil, laxative candy or chewing gum and expect them to make you suddenly sweet and buoyant and full of sunshine.

For they can't do it. They only move the bowels and a mere movement doesn't get at the cause. The reason for your down-and-out feeling is your liver. It should pour out two pounds of liquid bile into your bowels daily.

If this bile is not flowing freely, your food doesn't digest. It just decays in the bowels. Gas bloats up your stomach. You have a thick, bad taste and your breath is foul, skin often breaks out in blemishes. Your head aches and you feel down and out. Your whole system is poisoned.

It takes those good, old CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS to get these two pounds of bile flowing freely and make you feel "up and up." They contain wonderful, harmless, gentle vegetable extracts, amazing when it comes to making the bile flow freely.

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NOTICE

By virtue of an execution to me directed from the superior court of Wilkes county in a certain action entitled Wilkesboro Motor Co. against S. M. Estep et al, commanding me to levy upon the property of Pearl Davis to satisfy said execution and levy having been made by me on the following property as prescribed by law, I will, on Monday, the 1st day of July, 1935, at 2 o'clock p. m. at the courthouse door in Wilkesboro, N. C., offer for sale for cash to the highest bidder all the right, title, interest and estate of the defendant Pearl Davis in and to the following tract of land situated in Antioch township, adjoining the lands of George Sparks et al, and bounded as follows:

Being the Ab Shipwash home place in Antioch township, Wilkes county, and adjoining the lands of George Sparks and others. Bounded as follows: On the south by Harrison Roberts, on the west by George Sparks, on the north by the old J. C. Calloway 60-acre tract, being the Davis homestead, on the east by Otha Mathis, containing 140 acres, more or less.

This 31st day of May, 1935.

W. B. SOMERS, Sheriff.
By Old Wiles, D. S. 6-24-4t

Thursday Is Last Day to Apply For H.O.L.C. Loans

Period For Distressed Home Owners to Apply For Loans Ends June 27th

Salisbury, June 22.—The attention of home owners in distress who desire aid of the Home Owners' Loan corporation, was today called to the fact that under the amendment of the HOLC act, recently passed by congress, the period for filing new applications will expire at midnight, June 27. After that date, it was stated by T. C. Abernethy, state manager of the corporation here, no applications will be received and he warned all those desiring assistance to file their applications at once.

Mr. Abernethy stated that regulations, as to eligibility, remain virtually unchanged, and those desiring complete explanation of what cases are eligible may receive it either by calling at the state office, postoffice building, Salisbury, or one of the district offices, or by writing for full information. District offices are located at Raleigh, Charlotte, Greensboro, Asheville and Greenville.

During the past two years, the HOLC has made loans upon 11,125 urban homes in the state threatened with tax sales or foreclosures, the amount of such relief loans totaling $88,346,483, according to Mr. Abernethy.

Former Traphill Girl Is Killed

Is Thrown From Rumble Seat In Water As Car Hits Bridge

Miss Evelyn Mae Pruitt, 26-year-old native of Traphill, was fatally injured Saturday, June 15, when she was said to have been thrown from the rumble seat of an automobile when it struck the Donnaha bridge on the Elkin-Winston-Salem highway, and fell 40 or 50 feet into the water, landing on a log. She died shortly after reaching a hospital.

Miss Pruitt, who lived in Winston-Salem for the past seven years, was returning to that city from Traphill where she had been to visit relatives.

The car in which she was riding was said to have been driven by Troy Kirby, who lives near Ogburn Station. It was said the car skidded near the bridge, a fender hitting the railing and throwing the girl into the water. She sustained a fracture of the skull, a badly broken ankle and other injuries.

Five brothers, five sisters and three half-sisters survive.

C. M. T. CAMP GETS SCHOLARSHIPS

Two scholarships have been donated by Carolina colleges to the citizens military training camp at Fort Bragg, it is announced.

One of these was given by the University of North Carolina, has a value of $75.00, and runs for a period of one year. The other was donated by Newberry college, Newberry, S. C. It has a value of $110.00, plus the possibility of further aaid, and likewise runs for one year.

Both scholarships are to be awarded on a merit basis to outstanding members of the C. M. T. C. to be held at Fort Bragg in August. Both scholarships are open to competition by trainees from both North and South Carolina, but only to members of the Fort Bragg camp.

The period for making applications for this year's camp will close on June 30.

J. B. McCoy, of this city, is chairman of the committee which is assisting Wilkes county youths to secure appointments.

All maples have sweet sap, but some species contain too little sap or sugar to be worth tapping.

ISSUE REPORT ON SOIL ADAPTATIONS

The N. C. agricultural experiment station has just prepared a report on North Carolina soils and their relation to the 28 principal crops grown in the state.

The report is designed to aid farmers in the selection of soils best suited to the production of different crops, and also in the selection of crops best suited to their farms.

The authors, C. B. Williams, head of the agronomy department, and J. F. Lutz, assistant professor of soils, show the adaptability of various soils to the crops when fertilized according to recommendations of the agronomists.

Free copies may be obtained upon application to C. B. Williams, agronomy department, N. C. State College, Raleigh.

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COTTON PAYMENTS OVER $2,000,000

More than $2,000,000 has been distributed to North Carolina cotton growers in the first rental payment of the 1935 cotton adjustment program.

At the close of last week, checks had been mailed out to approximately 45,000 contract signers, with 65,000 signers yet to be paid, reported J. F. Criswell, of State college.

There are about 1,125 species of trees in the United States.

Lady's Painful Trouble Helped By Cardui

Why do so many women take Cardui for the relief of functional pains at monthly times? The answer is that they want results such as Mrs. Herbert W. Hunt, of Halleville, Texas, describes. She writes: "My health wasn't good. I suffered from cramping. My pain would be so intense it would nauseate me. I would just drag around, so sluggish and 'dopey.' My mother decided to give me Cardui. I began to mend. That tired, sluggish feeling was gone and the pains disappeared. I can't praise Cardui too highly because I know it helped me." . . . If Cardui does not help YOU, consult a physician.

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Just rub Zeeta on your feet and sprinkle it in your shoes. Then take out your watch. If at the end of 3 minutes you do not dance for joy at the blessed relief, go to your druggist and he will cheerfully refund your money.

Zeeta is sold and recommended by good druggists and department stores for 3 minute relief from aching feet, excessive perspiration, and also chafing and sunburn.

Travel By Bus

Three buses daily are now operating on a schedule through North Wilkesboro to Winston-Salem and Bristol, Va. Buses leave North Wilkesboro for Winston-Salem and points east at 9:45 a. m., 3:30 p. m. and 7:20 p. m.

Leave North Wilkesboro for Bristol 8:30 a. m., 2:30 p. m. and 7:00 p. m.

At Winston-Salem direct connections are made with Greensboro, Raleigh, Richmond, Norfolk, Danville and all points North. At Bristol connections are made for all points west. Leave North Wilkesboro 9:00 a. m., 2:30 p. m. and 7:30 p. m. for Lenoir, Morganton, Marion and Asheville.

East bound buses make direct connection for Statesville, Charlotte and points south.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CALL LOCAL AGENT

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