

100 True Detective Stories

The Print Of A Buckle

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"But I don't understand it. Jim's never failed to be home long before this since we've been married, and that's gone on 30 years. Something must have happened to him."

The speaker, an elderly woman, once more picked up the oil lamp from the table in the center of the living room of the big farm house some 40 miles northwest of Toronto, and tried in vain to peer out through the dense snow that beat up against the window.

"Nonsense," replied her companion. "Jim's got too much sense to try to get home through this storm. He's put up some place for the night and he'll be safe and sound in the morning, never fear."

But all night long, while the wind howled and whistled outside and the storm raged with all the severity of which a Canadian northeaster is capable, Mrs. James Agnew sat up, anxiously awaiting the return of her husband. The snow had ceased shortly after nine, but the gale had continued with unabated fury.

The dawn of the following day brought the solution to the mystery. Even before the sun came up Mrs. Agnew saw the body of her husband, lying less than 50 feet from the house—a dark red stain spreading itself fanwise from a hole in the center of his forehead.

Shortly after noon, John Wilson Murray, chief of the Canadian Secret Service, and the man responsible for the famous "swamp mystery" was on the spot, and had taken charge of the investigation. Meanwhile, however, scores of persons from the surrounding country had tramped the snow in the vicinity of the spot where the dead man's body had been found, practically eliminating any hope of finding a reliable footprint.

Murray, therefore, at first confided himself to consideration of reports of the local police, but found in them nothing upon which to base a theory.

Agnew, it appeared, had been somewhat delayed in his return home by reason of the violence of the storm. One of the villagers had seen him struggling through the snow about 8:30, and, making allowance for the difficulty of the journey, he would probably have reached his house shortly after 9 o'clock.

"Just about the time the snow stopped," asked Murray, and the reply was in the affirmative.

"Confound these busybodies," growled the chief. "If ever a footprint case was made to order, it is this one—but the whole thing's been messed up by the tracks of practically everyone for ten miles around. Agnew have any enemies?" he inquired, taking another tack.

"Not one. He was one of the most popular men in the district. Always everyone, and tramps knew that they could always get a meal at his back door. Guess that was the trouble. He's so well known that someone took the chance and held him up, realizing that he'd be carrying a good deal of money. Agnew probably showed fight and was shot, almost in the shadow of his house. The wind deadened the sound of the gun, and the tramp had plenty of time to make his escape."

"Maybe it was a tramp," muttered Murray, "and then again, maybe it wasn't. Keep everybody away from here this afternoon, if you have to build a fence around the place. I'm going over this ground with a fine-tooth comb."

Dividing the trampled snow into imaginary circles, the detective gradually worked his way outward from the blood-stained patch until he found himself on the edge of a clump of trees about a hundred feet away. There was no road within some distance of this section, and footprints were few. In fact, there was but one set, leading to a point directly under the largest of the trees, and with the toes of the

shoes pointed toward the point where Agnew's body had been found.

Exercising the greatest care, Murray examined the prints one after the other. Those on the further side of the tree had been almost obliterated by the snow, while those on the side nearest the Agnew house were comparatively clear and distinct. The story of the tracks was at once clear to the trained mind of the expert in crime detection. The man who had made them had taken refuge under the big tree and had stood there for some time—the condition of the prints on the far side of the tree proved that at least 15 minutes had elapsed between the time when he had sought shelter and the commencement of his journey toward the Agnew house. Possibly the crime had been premeditated. Possibly he had seen Agnew approaching, and knowing that he would be carrying a well-filled wallet, had decided on the spur of the moment to hold him up.

"After all," argued Murray, "the motive doesn't matter. What we want is the man behind it."

And the footprints showed clearly who that man was—one who had worn heavy overshoes, fastened to his boots by a strap with a buckle under the arch of the foot.

Making his way back along the line of prints which led to the tree, Murray eventually came to within sight of the house of a neighbor of Agnew, and, taking the precaution of throwing a cordon of police about the place, instituted a search for the overshoes with the telltale buckles. A thorough investigation, however, failed to bring them to light, and it was only when the detective entered the barn that he found what he sought. There in a corner, where their owner had thrown them, was a pair of shoes which precisely fitted the marks in the snow a hundred feet away from the scene of the Agnew murder.

"Who do these belong to?" Murray demanded.

"Jim Carney," was the reply. "He's a lad that works on the place here. Got a sort of room over this, if you want to see it."

The detective's reply was a leap up the stairs, for he had heard the sound of a muffled movement above him, and he realized that he would have to act quickly. Bursting into the room, he had just time to catch sight of a boyish figure lifting a revolver to his temple. A moment later Murray had the gun, and the boy was crouched in a corner, whimpering that he had "never meant to do it."

On account of his extreme youth, Carney escaped the maximum penalty for his crime—but his revolver, with

one chamber empty, and the barrel still blackened from the smoke of the shot which killed James Agnew, took its place in Murray's collection of criminal relics, together with a plaster impression of the print of the buckle in the snow.

WANTS TO RENT A STONE CORPSE

Eighty-Year-Old "Body" a Big Worry to the Police.

Sycamore, Ill., June 18.—For rent: A much dead "corpse," guaranteed not to walk in the night nor to otherwise annoy the owner.

This is the ultimatum of Marian French, a penmanship teacher and owner of the "corpse." The "body," by the way, recently was alive enough to keep police in eight Indiana and Illinois towns on the jump for twenty-four hours. Even the Chicago police "fell" for the "corpse," although the latter was partly victimized by some active student from a journalist school who had a sense of humor.

The "corpse," now stored in a stable here, first came to the attention of the students at the Sycamore station. Trainmen, suspecting the box which contained it to be a bootlegger's storeroom (the box weighed 450 pounds), opened it. They found the corpse of a man, dead eighty years and in a petrified state.

When the journalistic students noticed the "find" they immediately scattered reports of a brutal trunk murder in which a woman was cast as the victim. "She was stabbed in a dozen places," said their sensational reports.

Police "snapped into it" and ran down clues. The Sycamore police finally denied the murder story and announced the corpse was that of a man dead at least eighty years. Its owner, French, was finally located.

He explained he had been carrying the body around for exhibition purposes. He called it a "real American mummy."

"I bought it from South Dakota cowboys in 1881 as a bona fide petrified man," he said.

"It's caused me lots of trouble, so I'm going to rent it out for exhibition purposes," he added. "No, I don't want to sell it."



There are certain peoples noted for the beauty of their teeth and other peoples equally well known for the ill-health of their teeth. If you will study the history of these peoples a bit you will find invariably that those with good teeth live on hard foods which require much chewing, and contain comparatively little starch, and that the most highly civilized nations are frequently those with the worst teeth.



Keep Your Teeth in Good Health.

English people, generally, have poor teeth and hate dentists. American people are inclined to have poor teeth but probably take better care of them than any other nation in the world. An "American dentist" can command almost any price in foreign countries.

We Americans, and by that I mean both the States and Canada, are inclined to eat too much starch and too many soft foods. Our teeth literally do not get enough exercise, and as starch ferments in the mouth decay sets at an early age.

It is absolutely necessary to visit a good dentist every six months or even oftener, for the teeth become coated with tartar, this tartar gets under the gums, irritates them, eventually causes little puss cells and by its irritation causes the gums to shrink, and pyorrhoea sets in. Then the teeth loosen and drop out.

If the teeth are kept absolutely clean, by brushing them at least twice a day, much of this can be avoided. But only a dentist can get off the tartar under the gums.

Anxious Eleanor—Your anemia causes the pimples. They will disappear as you build up the quality of your blood. Your weight is correct.

Perplexed—Your yellow skin comes from a sluggish liver. You can help it by drinking more water and eating plenty of fruit, green vegetables and salads, which can be made from dandelion leaves.

The cold cream is used first, as it softens the skin, preparing it for the treatment. Ice always completes the treatment, as it closes the pores.

H. P. T.—You can reduce that fleshiness under the arms by rolling the arms in the shoulder socks and describing a circle with the hands. Take the exercise first with one arm, then the other one and finally, roll both at the same time. Begin it with a slow motion and increase until the arms whirl around as if they were wheels.

Tomorrow—Old Age and Digestion.

All inquiries addressed to Miss

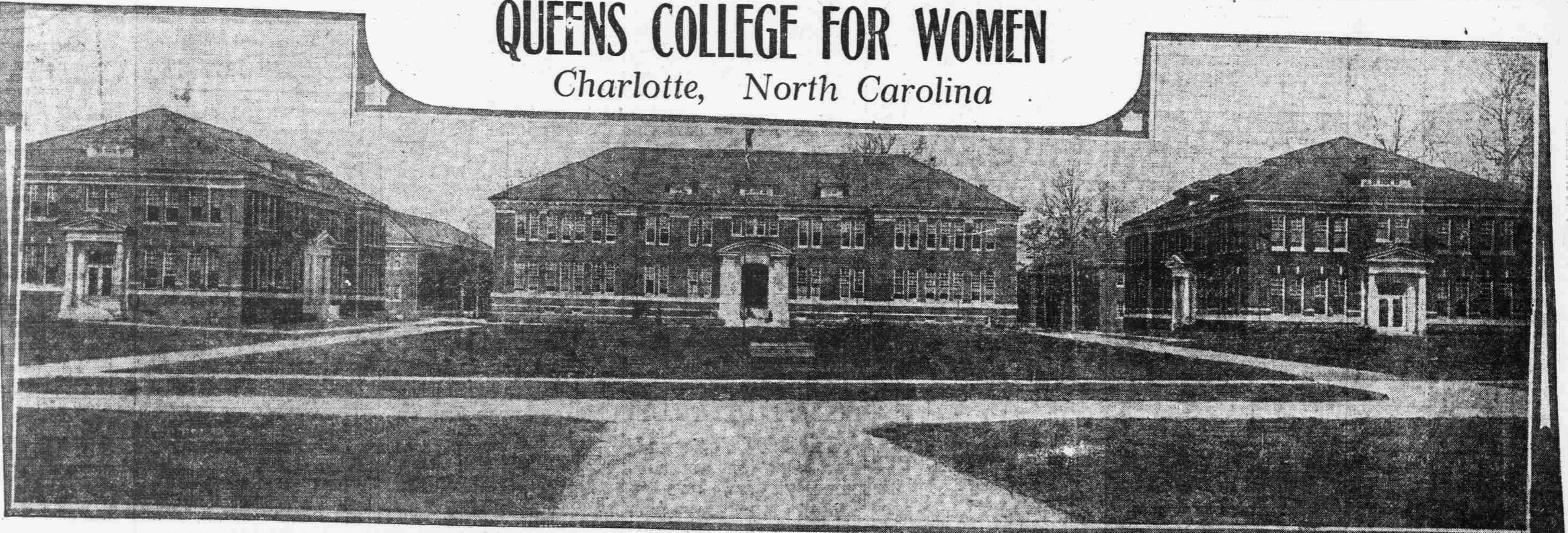
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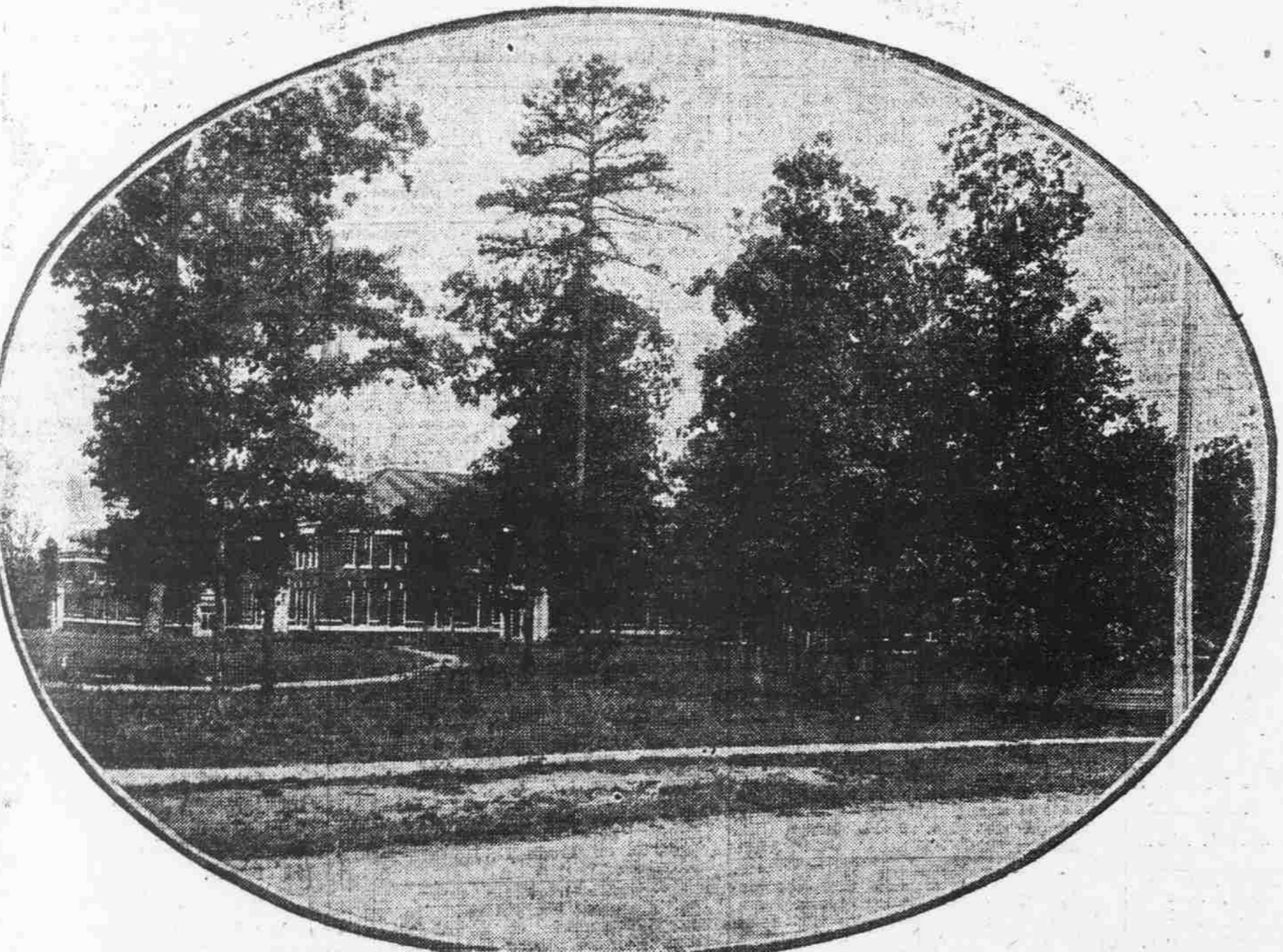
Tan covert cloth makes this notable riding suit. A fancy tan and brown barred vest gives a bright touch to the whole. The rough straw sailor and the silk shirt complete the costume.

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