

# THE DIVORCE COURT MURDER

BY MILTON PROPPER



## FOURTH INSTALLMENT

Rankin's voice showed his disappointment. "The door isn't latched," he announced. "I was afraid of that. Somebody in these offices has fastened the catch, which means that the whole world could have entered from the outside."

It was coincident with this startling discovery of the unlatched door that the telephone operator appeared at the door from the library to announce Dr. Sackett. The black-garbed coroner's physician entered behind her. He was followed by a photographer from Headquarters, and then by Johnson, the fingerprint expert. As soon as introductions had been made, Sackett, assisted by Dr. Clark, began his examination of the body. While Johnson was producing an insufflator and a magnifying glass from his kit for the detection of prints, Rankin cautioned him: "Pay particular attention to knobs of both doors and to the windows."

The expert acquiesced with a grunt. "While they're busy in here, we'd best continue the investigation in the library," Rankin suggested, "It's too crowded."

Accompanied by the two men, he carried Mrs. Keith's pocketbook with him into the next room. It had been on the desk before her, a fine pebble-point bag.

In the library, Rankin went to the door, and beckoned Jenks.

"Here is your first job, Jenks," he said. "I want you to quiz the entire force in there and learn what you can of their actions. I'm especially interested in finding out who came in here today—anyone at all, whether employees or clients—and when they did so."

Mr. Dawson shook his head. "If it's your object to learn who opened that door to fifteen-o-five," he observed, "I fear that won't help you much. You really have no idea when it was unlocked; it might have been done some other day, by any of a dozen callers, who recently used the library."

"Except, Mr. Dawson," the detective countered, "that the criminal couldn't have foreseen until today—possibly not until Mrs. Keith arrived—that she would be in there, waiting alone. Do you recall the last time you noticed the latch open?"

"I haven't had occasion to try it for weeks; in fact, I haven't been using the office at all for longer than that. I'm only certain it wasn't opened by my key."

Rankin shrugged and spread his arms in a brief, comprehensive gesture.

He continued his instructions to Jenks. "See if any of the staff remembers finding the door locked more recently than Mr. Dawson does."

"O. K.," Jenks promised. "Anything else?"

Rankin drew out his watch and nodded toward the library window and the towering structure visible across the street.

"That's another thing we mustn't overlook," he said; "the chance that some employee in those offices observed some suspicious acts over here. See to it the people on this side of the building are questioned early in the morning."

As soon as Jenks departed to carry out his orders, he opened Mrs. Keith's pocketbook. Mr. Dawson and the court clerk watched him as he placed on the library table a gold vanity case with the chased initials B. W. K., lipstick, a key ring of five keys, a handkerchief and a nail file. Another compartment held tickets to a charity ball and a checkbook which Rankin put aside for future scrutiny. Beneath what appeared another handkerchief, he found a small bottle of clear, colorless liquid.

Even before he uncorked it, a reeking pungent odor revealed its contents to be chloroform. The cloth was actually a thick cotton pad, still damp from its saturation with the drug. The bottle, large enough for four ounces, was half empty. It lacked a label and the distinguishing marks of any druggist. Mr. Simpkins made the first surprised comment.

"Why, that must be the . . . stuff the criminal smothered her with, Mr. Rankin!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Why do you suppose he hid it in her purse? Surely that's a dangerous thing to do."

The detective shrugged. "Why not? He couldn't carry it around and this is as safe a way to get rid of it as any." Pocketing the checkbook, he returned the other articles casually to the handbag and addressed Mr. Dawson.

"I think I'm ready now to inquire what others, besides your force, can tell me of the tragedy," he announced. "I'll question your partners first."

"Neither of them is here, Mr. Rankin," the lawyer informed him. "Mr. Locke is in New York on an important case—gone since Monday. Mr. MacQuire is playing in a golf tournament this afternoon."

"Then I'll question the immediate parties to the hearing, and their lawyers. One at a time; if you'll be good enough to have Mr. Trumbull come in, I'll start with him."

When summoned, Allen Rowland's attorney entered the library from Mr. Dawson's office. Although still under thirty-five, he looked at least five years older.

After Mr. Dawson introduced him,

the detective began without further preliminaries.

"Perhaps I can best make progress with this case, Mr. Trumbull"—he motioned him to a chair—"by clearing up what happened here this afternoon before the meeting. But first I need information about Mrs. Keith. You stated at the hearing, I believe, that she is connected with a leading family in the city?"

"So she is, Mr. Rankin," Mr. Trumbull returned. "Mrs. Barbara Keith is the wife of Mortimer Keith and lives in Chestnut Hill at the Aldwych Apartments."

"Mortimer Keith," he repeated, "the silk manufacturer?"

Once more, he could plead an off-hand familiarity with a name involved in the tragedy. Few indeed, in Philadelphia, had not heard of the Keith family, distinguished historically and politically since the American Revolution. Mortimer Keith was the last of his line, molded in the family tradition, austere, upright and reserved. When his ancestors' estate was threatened by depletion, his dominating personality and enterprise rebuilt both. He was well into middle age, Rankin vaguely recalled, when he married a beautiful woman much his junior, about four years earlier.

Whatever the previous importance of the crime, because of the prominence of the divorce action, it paled into insignificance before this new revelation. Murder was always murder; but the identity of the dead witness—no plebeian citizen or mere menial—gave it

additional promise of being a genuine cause celebre.

"Yes, that's who she is," the lawyer replied to his query, "Mrs. Mortimer Keith."

"Then her husband will have to be notified of what's happened at once. I'll want to question him about Mrs. Keith as promptly as possible."

He summoned the remaining policeman from the outer room and imparted directions for communicating with the manufacturer.

"Now, Mr. Trumbull," Rankin continued, after the officer had gone, "how long before the meeting began today did you arrive with Mrs. Keith?"

Mr. Trumbull shook his head. "I didn't bring her at all, Mr. Rankin; I came here alone and Mr. Rowland accompanied her into town. It was arranged that he go for her to her residence in Chestnut Hill, and join me here. I reached here about two-twenty-five; they drove in with Mrs. Keith's chauffeur five minutes afterward."

"At half past two, eh? And at what time did you leave her in that office to wait until you were ready for her testimony?"

"About ten minutes later, I should judge," the other replied. "Then Mr. Rowland went down to the street to dismiss the chauffeur, who was parked outside the building. She had ordered him to stay. Rowland suggested we let him go and use my car to get home."

"Are you certain," the detective probed, "he really went downstairs to speak to the chauffeur?"

The lawyer replied vigorously, in

tones that brooked no doubt. "Positive, Mr. Rankin; in fact, I walked into the hall with him and saw him take the elevator. He was gone only a few minutes, less than five; I was phoning in the outer office when he returned."

"Then two-forty was the last time either of you saw her alive?" Rankin eyed him searchingly. "You didn't enter fifteen-o-five again, through either this library or the door from the hall, while you were out there?"

"Not until I found her dead," he returned. "We left her completely alone. Mr. Rowland and I went into Mr. Dawson's private office for the next ten minutes, where we could discuss today's . . . strategy without being disturbed. I can vouch that he never left me the entire time, nor I him. Then Mr. Dawson arrived, and we assembled for the hearing."

The detective bent forward, toying with a pencil he took from the table. "Why was it arranged, Mr. Trumbull, that Mrs. Keith wait apart in there, instead of outside in fifteen-o-seven? Had you some special reason for that?"

"It was done for privacy and to spare her all possible distress," the lawyer explained. "She was doing us a service in offering her evidence, but naturally, in her position, she desired no publicity. She even dressed inconspicuously. In the main office, under the eyes of employees and casual visitors, she would have felt uncomfortable. And she couldn't stay in the library with Mrs. Rowland and Mr. Willard; that would have been even more embarrassing."

"Then they had already arrived before you?"

"Yes, I suppose so since they came earlier than I and waited for Mr. Dawson here. In fact, they were here when Mr. Rowland entered fifteen-o-five with Mrs. Keith; he came out at once and closed this door between the rooms. So they saw us leave her at two-forty."

Rankin nodded. "Had they any idea in advance that it was she who would

be Mr. Rowland's leading witness against them? That is, before she arrived today? Was her name mentioned, for instance, in your written defense?"

Mr. Trumbull's forehead wrinkled in a frown of uncertainty and reflection. "No, the answer I filed was purely formal and withheld all the essential details. And considering the nature of Mrs. Keith's evidence, I don't believe his wife was in a position to learn her identity."

"TO BE CONTINUED"

### The Woman's Angle

Half the deaths that now occur in childbirth are preventable, according to Mrs. John Sloane, vice president of New York's Maternity Center. The statement is based on statistics by the Federal Children's Bureau in fifteen states and by other qualified organizations. The first rules for the expectant mother: see a competent doctor every three or four weeks for checks of blood pressure, temperature and pulse. Consult him at once in case of discomfort.

Summer days, when you feel like eating nothing but cold meats, are hard on the whole system if you give in to that inclination. At least one meal of

the day—preferably dinner—should include one hot course. Let it be a well-cooked portion of meat or fish with a hot vegetable to go with it. Without this one substantial meal, you and your complexion are likely to suffer.

A filling summer salad suggestion: flaked crabmeat and cucumber, mayonnaise and a little Worcestershire sauce. Mix the crabmeat with the seeds of the cucumbers after slicing lengthwise and scraping out the seed trough. Heap the crab mixture in the cucumber hollows and arrange on a bed of lettuce.

Crabmeat delight: Beat one egg and add to two cups mashed, cooked summer squash, a half-cup flour and a half teaspoon baking powder, beat in a can of flaked crabmeat, drop from large spoon on a hot, buttered griddle and cook brown on both sides.

One of the coolest outfits for summer motoring consists of a three piece play outfit of shorts with attached halter top and a separate dress, one piece, which buttons down the front. Hundreds of comfort-minded women are wearing them this summer for motoring, unbuttoning the dress when it's sizzling hot.

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## COMING ATTRACTIONS AT PALACE THEATRE

### Film Players Always Learn Something New

Barrymore Studied Art Of Blood Transfusion For His Latest Role

Lionel Barrymore had to experiment with lancet and tourniquet, vein-clips and arterial apparatus. He even took a practical course, under an experienced physician.

## Advance Program

WEDNESDAY, JULY 24TH THRU TUESDAY, JULY 30TH

WEDNESDAY, JULY 24TH  
Victor MacLaglen-Margot Grahame-Wallace Ford in "THE INFORMER"  
Broadway Brevity in Color: "In This Corner"  
Morning Matinee: 10:30; Afternoon: 3:15-3:45; Evening: 7:30-9:15. Admission: 10-26c

THURSDAY, JULY 25TH  
Bette Davis with Ian Hunter, Colin Clive, Allison Skipworth in "The Girl From 10th Avenue"  
Radio Stars Revue: "Main Street Follies"  
No Morning Matinee: Ladies Matinee 3:15—Two For Price Of One—26c; Evening: 7:30-9:15. Adm. 10-26c

FRIDAY, JULY 26TH  
Ann Sothern-Gene Raymond with Bill Robinson in "HOORAY FOR LOVE"  
Episode No. 2 "Rustlers Of Red Dog"  
RKO Novelty: "Pathe Topic No. 2."  
Morning Matinee: 10:30; Afternoon: 3:15-3:45; Evening: 7:30-9:15. Admission 10-26c

SPECIAL SHOWS  
FRIDAY NIGHT AT 11:30  
SATURDAY MORN. MATINEE 10:30  
Robert Taylor, Jean Parker, Ted Healy, Una Merkel in "MURDER IN THE FLEET"  
Charlie Chase in "Okay Toots"  
Box Office opens Friday night 11:30; picture 11:30. All Seats—26c  
Box Office opens Saturday morning 10:15; picture 10:30. Adm. 10-26c

SATURDAY, JULY 27TH  
Buck Jones with Noel Francis in "STONE OF SILVER CREEK"  
Top Notcher Cartoon: "Only the Brave"  
Terrytoon: "South Pole or Bust"  
Continuous Shows Starting 2:30. Admission: 10-26c

MONDAY AND TUESDAY JULY 29TH AND 30TH  
Lionel Barrymore, Jean Arthur, Chester Morris, Lewis Stone in "PUBLIC HERO NO 1"  
Paramount Variety: "Souvenirs No. 2"  
Paramount Sound News.  
Morning Matinee: 10:30; Afternoon: 3:15-3:45; (No matinees Tuesday); Evening: 7:30-9:15. Adm. 10-26c

Then he operated, and gave a blood-transfusion, before camera and microphone.

Barrymore's surgical incursion was in his new role in "Public Hero Number 1", gripping drama of the work of the secret service in combating criminals and gangsters, which comes Mon. and Tues., July 29-30 to the Palace Theatre.

In the new Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture, he gave a transfusion, Chester Morris donating the blood, and Joseph Calleia, as the gangland overlord, receiving it.

He Had Two Tutors  
Not a drop of blood was transferred, of course, but Barrymore had to learn the details of the operation, under the tutelage of Dr. Harry Anderson, Culver City police surgeon, and Peggy Coleman, nurse at the studio's emergency hospital, just as painstakingly as any senior in medical college.

The operation, as was the case with every other detail in the picture, was carried out with absolute authenticity of detail. The story is based on actual police, secret service and newspaper reports. The story, by J. Walter Ruben and Wells Root, a veteran newspaperman, was directed by Ruben, and is perfectly accurate cross-section of crime problems of today.

In addition to Barrymore, Morris and Calleia, the cast includes Jean Arthur, Paul Kelly, Lewis Stone and other notables. Lucien Hubbard was the producer.

### Gobs And Murder Mix In Unusual Mystery Drama

Mysterious crimes aboard a cruiser, an officer turned detective to ferret out a criminal on a suspicion laden vessel, weird pursuits, sinister shadows, and an amazing fight in the flooded powder magazine of the warship, provide thrills in "Murder in the Fleet," Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's amazing detective romance coming Friday

### SPECIAL SHOWS:

FRIDAY NIGHT 11:30  
SATURDAY MORNING 10:30

MURDER IN PUBLIC!  
How was Duval killed? Who did it? You see the crime on a mighty warship—but it'll keep you puzzled—and laughing between thrills!



Box Office opens Friday Night 11:15; picture 11:30—All seats 26c.  
Box office opens Saturday Morning 10:15; picture 10:30. Adm. 10-26c.

night and Saturday morning to the Palace Theatre.

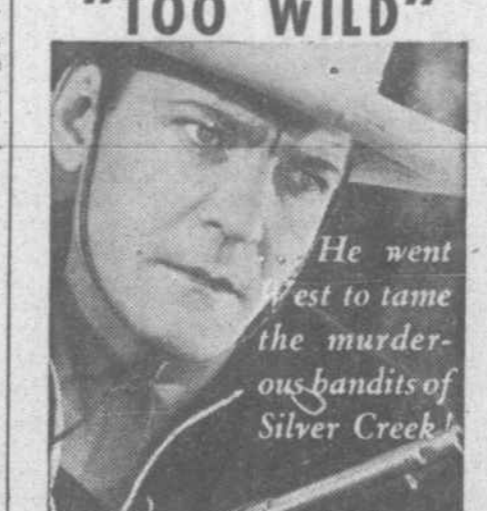
"Murder in the Fleet" deals with crimes aboard a warship during visitor's day. Civilians and crew are imprisoned on the vessel during an investigation in which everyone is under suspicion until the criminal is located in the final scenes. Edward Sedgwick, director of "Death on the Diamond," filmed the new picture.

A Notable Cast  
Robert Taylor, of "Society Doctor" and "Times Square Lady" and Jean Parker, who recently scored in "Sequoia," head an elaborate cast in the new production. Jean Hersholt plays the principal character role, and Una Merkel, Nat Pendleton, Ted Healy, Arthur Byron, Raymond Hatton, Mary Moran, Donald Cook, Mischa Auer, Robert Livingston, Keye Luke, Frank Shields and others of note are in the cast.

Among the amazing scenes are the attempted electrocution of a crew of mechanics, followed by pursuit of the mysterious criminal among the water tight bulkheads of the ship, and Robert Taylor's spectacular fight to the death with the cornered criminal in the ship's powder magazine, which is flooded, the water slowly rising while they fight.

Ian Hunter, known as "the handsomest man on the London stage," before First National brought him to Hollywood, had a reunion on the set of his Bette Davis co-starring picture, "The Girl From 10th Avenue," with Colin Clive. The two actors were on the stage together frequently in England.

### Saturday, July 27th "TOO WILD"



He went west to tame the murderous handits of Silver Creek!  
BUCK JONES  
STONE OF SILVER CREEK  
A Universal Western Feature. Directed by Nick Grinde.  
Continuous Shows Starting at 2:30. Admission 10-26c

### Sothern, Raymond New Romantic Team In "Hooray for Love"

Coming To Palace Theatre On Friday, July 26th

Gene Raymond and Ann Sothern, teamed as sweethearts in RKO Radio's "Hooray for Love," bring a new type of glamour to the screen.

More than anything else they typify youth, with its hopes, ideals and ambitions, and their delightful love scenes are said to have high romantic beauty. As a college boy who aspires to be a Broadway producer, Raymond appears in a role for which he is ideally suited. The part calls for good looks, dramatic ability and a singing voice. In Raymond are combined all these

qualities, topped with a high measure of glamour. During his recent personal appearance tour, the women turned out en masse to the theatres where he was playing.

Ann Sothern has a dainty loveliness that is alluring to men and women alike. She is an actress of unusual ability and possessed of a fine voice. In her role of a young actress, she has full scope for all her talents.

"Hooray for Love" is a delightful comedy drama highlighted with a musical revue, which includes Maria Gambarelli, Pert Kelton, and Bill Robinson and Jeni Legon.

Alfred E. Green, who directed Bette Davis in the First National production "The Girl From 10th Avenue," showing at the Palace Thursday, July 25th set a new gum chewing record. He chewed 14 sticks of gum at one time.

## MONDAY AND TUESDAY, JULY 29-30TH

### SECRETS OF THE "SECRET SERVICE!" never before on any screen!



Crashing drama as one of Uncle Sam's "under-cover men" solves the "Clue of the Limping Surgeon", and leads the greatest man-hunt in history! He thumbed his nose at Hell—but see what happened when a woman's kiss intervened!  
Public Hero 1 NUMBER 1  
with  
Lionel Barrymore • Jean Arthur  
Chester Morris • Joseph Calleia  
Paul Kelly • Lewis Stone  
Directed by J. Walter  
Produced by Lucien Hubbard  
Morning Matinee 10:30; Afternoon 3:15-3:45; (No Matinees Tuesday); Evenings 7:30-9:15 P. M.—Admission 10 and 26c