

THE DIVORCE COURT MURDER

By MILTON PROPPER



FOURTH INSTALMENT

SYNOPSIS

Persons are in an inner office of the law firm of Dawson, McQuire, Locke & Philadelphia. A mass hearing in the divorce case of Rowland vs. Bowland is under way. Rowland, represented by her brother, Mr. Willard; Mr. Rankin, the defendant, and his attorney, Mr. Trumbull; the court, Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, the master, the six persons. There is a new development in the case. After the hearing in earlier hearing, Mr. Rowland digs up evidence which the court's permission to see witnesses and resist the Judge Dawson overrules the objections of Mr. Willard, orders the witness brought in. Rowland's lawyer goes to get the witness but finds her dead—chloroformed. She is Mrs. Barbara Keith, a prominent Philadelphia dress man. Detective Tommy Rankin is assigned to the case. He is questioning all of the parties involved in the case.

GO ON WITH THE STORY

Rankin's voice showed his disappointment. "The door isn't open," he announced. "I was told of that. Somebody in the office has fastened the door, which means that the world could have entered from the outside." This was coincident with this discovery of the unopened door that the telephone operator appeared at the door to the library to announce Sackett. The black-goat-cornor's physician ended behind her. He was followed by a photographer from headquarters, and then by Rankin, the fingerprint expert. As soon as introductions had been made, Dr. Sackett, asked by Dr. Clark, began his examination of the body. While Rankin was producing an injector and a magnifying glass from his kit for the depositions of prints, Rankin caught particular attention to knobs of both doors and to windows.

While they're busy in here,

best continue the investigation in the library," Rankin suggested. "It's too crowded." Accompanied by the two, he carried Mrs. Keith's pocketbook with him into the room. It had been on the table before her, a fine petit bag. In the library, Rankin went to the door into the main office beckoned Jenks. "Here is your first job," he said. "I want you to use the entire force in there to learn what you can of the actions. I'm especially interested in finding out who is in here today—anyone at all whether employees or clients and when they did so." Mr. Dawson shook his head. "It's your object to learn who opened that door to fifteen-five," he observed. "I don't think that won't help you much. I really have no idea when it was unlocked; it might have been done some other day, by one of a dozen callers, who rely on the library." "Except, Mr. Dawson," the detective countered, "that the door couldn't have foreseen today—possibly not until Mrs. Keith arrived—that she would be in there, waiting for you. Do you recall the last time you noticed the latch on?" "I haven't had occasion to go to it for weeks; in fact, I haven't been using the office at all for longer than that. I'm certain it wasn't opened by any key." Rankin shrugged and spread his arms in a brief, comprehensive gesture. "I continued his instructions to Jenks. "See if any of the staff remembers finding the door locked more recently than Mr. Dawson does." "K. Tommy," Jenks prodded. "Anything else?" Rankin drew out his watch and nodded toward the library door and towering structure visible across the street. "That's another thing we can't overlook," he said; "the chance that some employee in those offices observed some suspicious acts over the past few days." "See to it the people on the 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 and 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 drug.

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 the 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 Aldrich Apartments." Obviously impressed, the detective raised his eyebrows and vented a low whistle. "Mortimer Keith," he repeated, "the silk manufacturer?" "Once more, he could plead an offhand familiarity with a name involved in the tragedy. Few indeed, in Philadelphia, had not heard of the Keith family, distinguished historically 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 drive 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-five?" 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 ever 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."

(Continued Next Week)

NOTICE OF TRUSTEE'S SALE

Notice is hereby given that under and by virtue of the power of sale conferred on the undersigned Trustee by a certain Deed of Trust, executed by K. C. Carter and wife Lenor Carter, to Mrs. Eva Sholder, Trustee, dated April 1, 1931, and recorded in Book 340 Page 182, of the Duplin County Registry, default having been made in the payment of the indebtedness secured thereby, and the holder of the notes having demanded that the said Trustee exercise the power of sale therein conferred, the undersigned Trustee will therefore, on **MONDAY, THE 1ST DAY OF JULY, 1935**, at 12 o'clock noon, at the court house door in Kenansville, N. C. (Duplin County), expose for sale to the highest bidder for cash the following described lands, to wit: Situated near the Town of Wallace on plat of property owned by Jonathan Murray and now known as the M. M. Murray place, as surveyed and plotted by Paul King, C. E., which said plat or map is recorded in Book 216, Page 32 of the public registry of Duplin County, and being tract Number 2 as laid out in the said map and contains 19.51 acres, more or less, the same being the property where K. C. Carter now lives. This the 31st day of May, 1935.

MRS. EVA SHOLDER, Trustee
Beasley & Stevens, Attys.
June 6-13-20-27 —728

NOTICE OF SALE

By virtue of the power of sale in a mortgage deed made by T. W. Fussell and Annie Fussell, his wife, to W. H. Hall, dated April 1, 1925, and recorded in Book 258, page 478, default having been made in the payment of the bonds thereby secured, the undersigned will offer for sale at the courthouse door in Kenansville, Duplin County, on **MONDAY, JULY 8, 1935**, at 12 o'clock noon, to the highest bidder, for cash, a certain

tract or lot of land in Rose Hill, N. C., described and defined as follows, to wit:

Beginning at a stake at the intersection of the western edge of Pine St. with the northern edge of Center Street and running thence with the northern edge of Center Street about S. 75 1-2 W. to a stake, Isaac Cottle's corner; thence Cottle's line about N. 11 1-2 W., one-half the distance from the northern edge of Center Street and 150 feet at right angles from the southern edge of Ridge Street; thence Ward and Mallard's line parallel with the center of Main Street, about N. 75 3-8 E. to the western edge of Pine Street; (thence) about S. 14 3-8 E. 150 feet to the beginning, containing the lower lot of the land purchased by Maury Ward and J. C. Mallard of D. T. Carr and wife, on the north side of Center Street and the western side of Pine Street, and land conveyed by said Ward and Mallard to T. W. Fussell by deed dated May 21, 1914, and recorded in Book 164, page 111, of the registry of Duplin County.

Advertised this June 7, 1935.
W. H. HALL, Mortgagee.
Oscar B. Turner, Attorney.
June 13-20-27 July 4 —730

NOTICE OF SALE

By virtue of power of sale contained in the Deed of Trust from J. J. Tew and wife, Sidie Frances to W. T. Wallace, Trustee, dated Aug. 4, 1930,

book 337, page 4, Registry of Duplin County, default having been made in the payment of the debt secured thereby, the undersigned will sell at the courthouse door in Kenansville, N. C., on **MONDAY, JULY 1, 1935**, at 1 o'clock P. M. to the highest bidder for cash lands situated in Rose Hill Township, Duplin County, said State, described as follows:

First Tract being lot No. 8 in block 10, as per map of town of Rose Hill, east side of A. C. L. Railroad, showing C. M. Stienmetz property, and conveyed to J. J. Tew by Macon Cavenaugh and wife, book 207, page 82, Registry of Duplin County.

Second Tract, containing 5 79-100 acres, and being lands conveyed to D. P. Tew by Charles J. Newton, book 251, page 27, Registry of Duplin County.

Third Tract, containing 17,000 sq. feet, more or less and being the lands described in Deed from John Newton to J. J. Tew, book 284, page 524, Registry of Duplin County. This May 24, 1935.

W. T. WALLACE, Trustee.
Geo. R. Ward, Atty.
June 6-13-20-27 —726

RHEUMATISM

RELIEVE PAIN IN 5 MINUTES
To relieve the torturing pain of Rheumatism, Neuritis, Mumps or Lumbago, in 5 minutes, get the Doctor's Prescription MURITO. Absolutely safe. No opiates, no narcotics. Does the work quickly—and must relieve your pain in nine minutes or money back at once. Don't suffer. Use MURITO today.

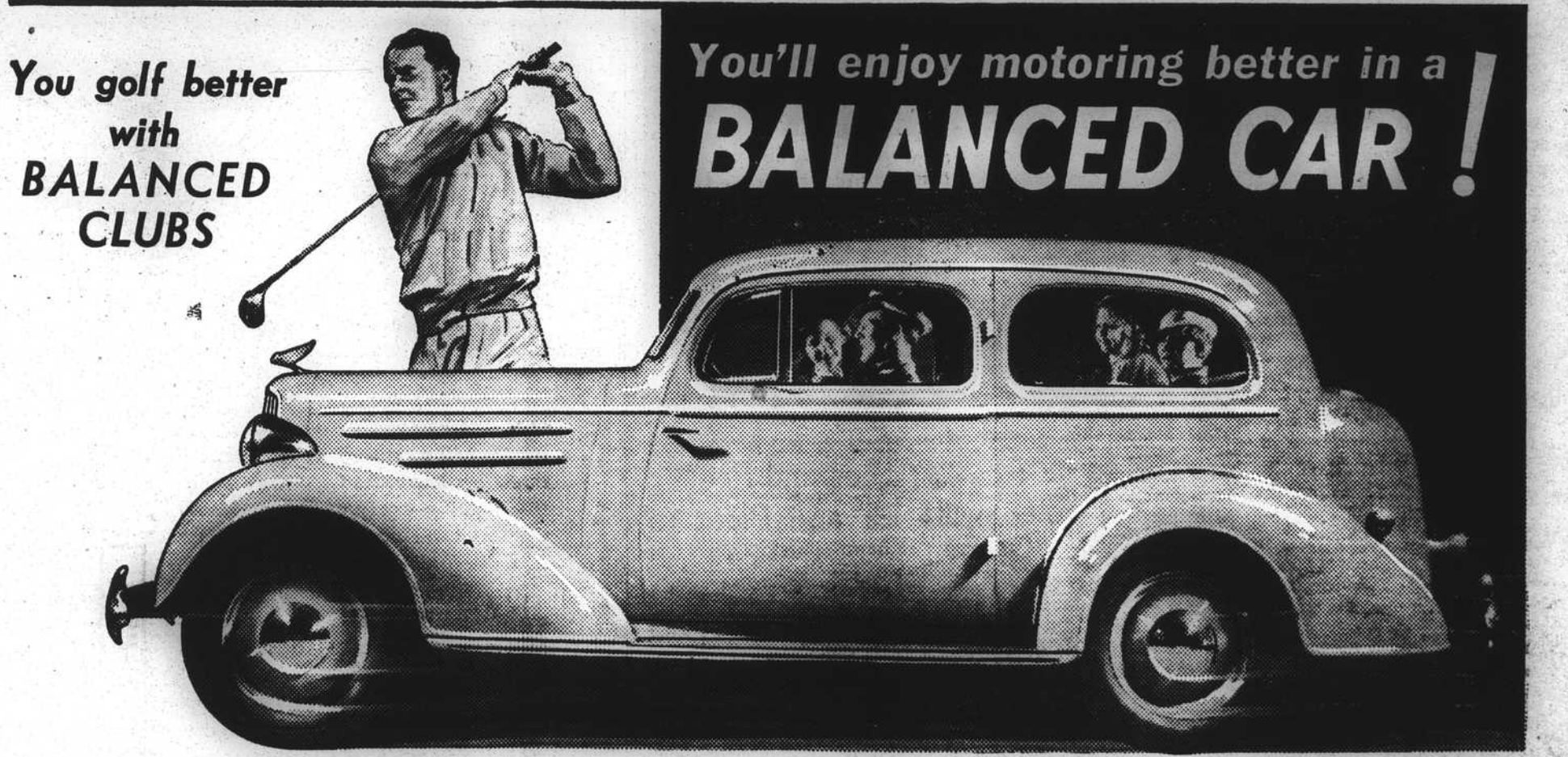
NOTICE TO TAX PAYERS

TOWN OF WALLACE

I have been ordered by the Mayor and Board of Commissioners of the Town of Wallace to collect all delinquent taxes and water bills due the Town on or before July 1. Please make an effort to settle your taxes and water bills on or before the above date and save additional cost and inconvenience.

F. L. Boone,
Town Tax Collector.

The most finely balanced low-priced car ever built



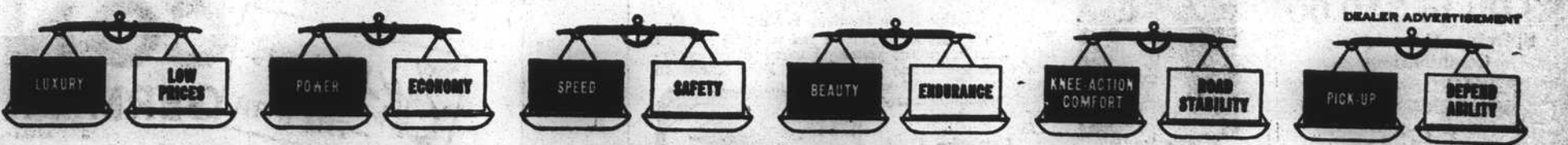
You golf better with **BALANCED CLUBS**

You'll enjoy motoring better in a **BALANCED CAR!**

In all ways—
Aristocrat of the low-price field

Master De Luxe
CHEVROLET

Correctly balanced in all parts, in all qualities, the new Master De Luxe Chevrolet reveals its balanced value most impressively in the way it combines luxury with low prices. The Master De Luxe is outstanding in the beauty of its Body by Fisher... in the comfort of its Knee-Action Ride... in the safety of its Turret-Top construction and weatherproof cable-controlled brakes... in the performance and economy of its Blue-Flame valve-in-head engine. To own this beautiful motor car is to own the aristocrat of the low-price field—the most finely balanced low-priced car ever built!



CAVANAUGH CHEVROLET CO., Inc. Wallace, North Carolina

CHEVROLET MOTOR COMPANY, DETROIT, MICHIGAN
Compare Chevrolet's low delivered prices and easy G. M. A. C. terms. A General Motors Value

DEALER ADVERTISEMENT