

Probe By Detective Story Fan May Free "Lifer" From Prison

Rich Lumberman's Quiet Inquiry Uncovers Evidence Indicating That Convict Innocent

Lansing, Mich.—Because a rich Lansing lumberman is interested in murder mysteries, Albert Eichorn stands a good chance of being released from the Michigan state penitentiary at Marquette, where he has served 12 years of a life sentence for a murder that he says he didn't commit.

It is now becoming apparent that Eichorn probably is an innocent man. In the week of November 4 his application for a pardon will come up before Arthur D. Wood, state commissioner of pardons and paroles.

If he gets out he can thank Elmer Hammond, the Lansing lumberman who couldn't resist the temptation to look into a real life murder mystery.

Boy Finds Body.

The crime for which Eichorn was sent to prison occurred in the fall of 1917. A farm boy, taking cows to pasture, found the body of Beatrice Epler, 18-year-old daughter of Samuel Epler, a farmer living near Alma, Mich., lying beside a path. The girl had been criminally attacked, and finger marks on her throat showed how she had been choked to death.

For several months no trace of her slayer could be found, although a \$2000 reward was offered. Then a deputy sheriff learned that the girl had been seen on her last night alive with one John Brennan, a carnival owner.

Then Mrs. Anna Gilson, a neighbor, came forward to tell a story that seemed to clear up the mystery.

On the night of the murder, she said, Brennan, Eichorn, Beatrice and another woman had attended a party in her home. All were intoxicated, she said, and Beatrice had been attacked by Eichorn, after which the guests left, carrying Beatrice, semi-conscious and moaning.

All Are Arrested.

Brennan, Eichorn and the woman—a Mrs. Inez Johnson—were promptly arrested. Mrs. Johnson was convicted and sent to the Detroit house of correction for life. After serving eight years she was pardoned, and her present whereabouts are not known.

Brennan was tried next. He won a change of venue and was acquitted.

Then Eichorn was tried. He could not get a change of venue, and sen-

timent ran strongly against him. In the first place, he was known as a heavy drinker. Then, in the second place, he was a German—and this was in war time. He was convicted and sent to Marquette for life.

The case was quickly forgotten. Then Elmer Hammond took a hand. This Lansing lumberman was fond of mystery stories. Especially he liked stories in which the solution hung on fingerprints. So, after a time, just for diversion, he took to studying real-life murder cases, to see what part fingerprints played in them. At last he happened on the Eichorn case.

Then Hammond discovered a strange thing. The finger-prints on Beatrice's throat had been proved not to be Eichorn's. Yet physicians testified that death had been caused by strangulation.

On top of that, Hammond learned that the \$2000 reward offered for the arrest of Beatrice's murderer had never been paid.

He concluded at once that Eichorn must be innocent. The finger-prints seemed to settle that point for good. So he enlisted some of his business men in the cause and they raised a fund to get to the bottom of the case.

Mrs. Gilson had been the chief witness against Eichorn. She had moved out of the state. Hammond at last located her in Kenosha, Wis., where she had remarried. She is now Mrs. Minnaugh. Lewis Martin, the deputy sheriff to whom the woman had originally made her statement, went to Kenosha to talk to her.

Confesses She Lied.

Then Mrs. Minnaugh made a confession—a confession that she had lied about the party at her

home; a confession that she had not seen Eichorn and Beatrice together, and that everything she had said about them was false.

A neighbor named David Beaudrais, she said, had come to her posing as a private detective, saying that he wanted to get the \$2,000 reward. He told her to tell a story implicating Eichorn she said, threatening to kill her if she did not, and promised to split the reward with her. She agreed, and the story she told in court was the result.

Action Due Soon.

An affidavit setting forth these facts has been obtained, and will be presented to the pardon commissioner early in November.

Beaudrais was finally found, dying in a New York sanitarium. He feebly denied Mrs. Minnaugh's story and then refused to discuss the case at all.

Meanwhile, Eichorn's wife is still living in Alma, confident that her husband will be freed, and as firmly convinced now as ever that he is an innocent man.

And Eichorn, stooped and gray, works among the flower beds at Marquette prison, insists that he is innocent, hopes that he will be released—and says, "Twelve years is a long time to take out of a man's life."

Word Puzzles In A Local Contest

To be or not to be! Statically or statically? To be or not to be! That's the question that is worrying Charlie Eskridge. The word appears in question twelve of his Ford contest, appearing in today's Star. Mr. Eskridge says nothing appertaining to the Ford is stratified. At the same time readers will be surprised to know that anything about the product is static. Read the question.

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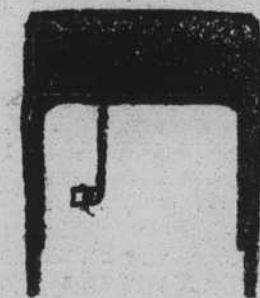
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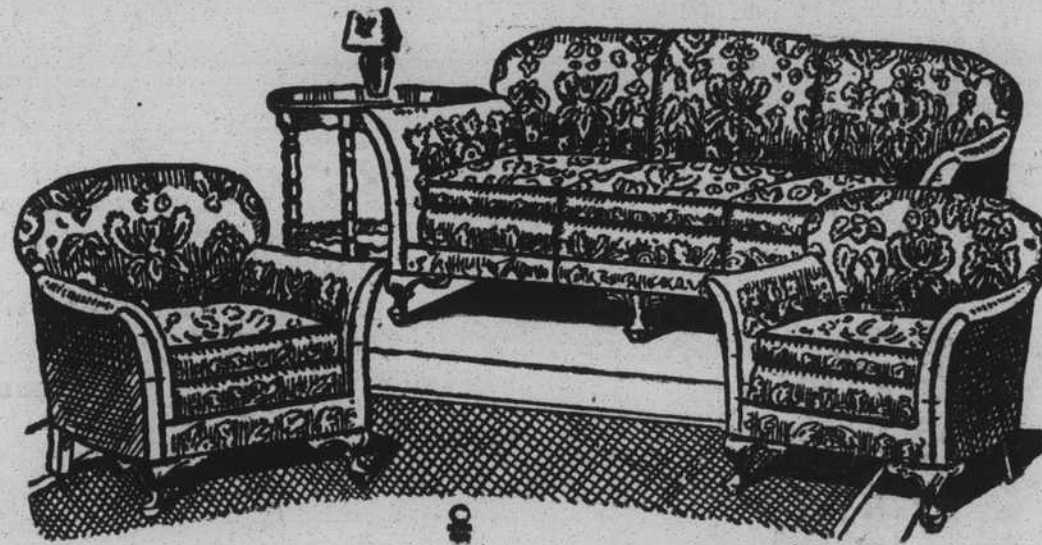
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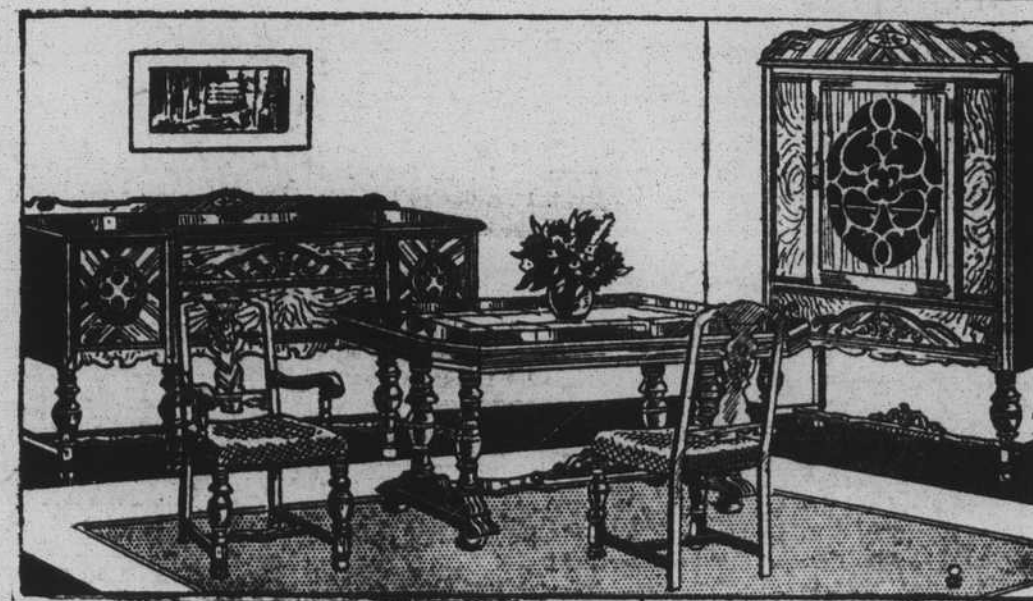


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