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FOUR AMERICAN MURDER MYSTERIES

written by
BERNARD BARSHAY

CONTENTS:

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FOUR AMERICAN MURDER MYSTERIES

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BERNARD BARSHAY

THE CASE OF THE AVARICIOUS DRUNKARD
THE CASE OF THE DREAM MAKER
THE CASE OF THE LITERARY CELEBRITY
THE CASE OF THE SIX CAPSULES

Descriptive Notes Are Inside Pocket

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4 AMERICAN MURDER MYSTERIES

The Case of the Six Capsules

The study of science is supposed to make a person think clearly, and persons who play the horses are popularly believed to be fools, but in "The Case of the Six Capsules" a student of medicine committed the fatal error which "merciless logic" would have avoided. Although it may seem strange, a knowledge of horse-racing and the lore of betting odds probably would have saved his life.

Back in 1892, Carlyle Wentworth Harris, a 22-year-old student in the College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University, was on trial for his life. He was charged with the murder of his wife, Helen, still in her teens and a student at Miss Comstock's fashionable boarding school for girls in New York.

Their secret, civil marriage had taken place shortly before she entered the school, and the school authorities were ignorant of this alliance. Helen had died from sulphate of morphine poisoning under very unusual and puzzling circumstances. The finger of guilt pointed squarely at her husband.

One January night in 1891, three roommates of Helen's, having returned from a concert, were retiring quietly. Helen, who had declined to go because of recent, recurring headaches, suddenly opened her eyes and said, "I feel as though I were going to die! Really, I feel numb and choky, but I guess it's because I was sleeping so soundly. I had such beautiful dreams, such beautiful sensations!"

A few minutes after the lights were turned out, Helen's labored breathing and low moans aroused her roommates who called the school physician, Dr. Fowler, and his assistant. They applied artificial respiration all night and gave her various stimulants. But at dawn she died.

Dr. Fowler had found an empty pill box bearing the initials, "C. W. H.," to which were added the words, "medical student." Informed the initials stood for Harris, who sometimes visited Miss Potts (Helen's maiden name), Dr. Fowler called him to the school and told him Helen was dead.

The young man seemed worried because he had made out the prescription for the tablets in the box although he was not yet a physician. Asked what each

capsule contained, Harris said, "I prescribed four and one-sixth grains of sulphate of quinine and one-sixth of a grain of sulphate of morphine, Dr. Fowler. There were four capsules."

Dr. Fowler said there was not enough morphine to kill her even if all four capsules were taken at once, but told him to ask the druggist if a mistake had been made in the prescription. Harris soon returned to say the druggist had informed him that the drugs had been mixed in the proper proportion.

The revelation, as the result of an autopsy, that quinine was absent from the brain although morphine was present; the fact that Helen never used drugs and that her body showed no marks which would indicate the use of a hypodermic; and that although Helen seemed to feel worse after taking the capsules, Harris insisted on her continuing to take them, resulted in his being indicted.

Then came the disclosure that they had been secretly married by an alderman, followed by evidence that he had apparently tired of her.

Then came something even more sensational: he had actually said to a close friend of Helen's, "My prospects would be ruined if the marriage became known and I would rather kill her and myself than have this get out. I wish Helen were dead and I was well out of it."

Furthermore, he had told Mrs. Potts, who had learned about her daughter's marriage and who wanted a public ceremony, that he would not have his family know of the marriage for a million dollars. In addition, Harris feared the consequences to his standing at medical school if the college authorities should discover not only that he was secretly married, but also that both he and Helen had used assumed names at the civil ceremony.

Nevertheless, in a letter to Harris, Mrs. Potts demanded a religious ceremony on February the eighth, the anniversary of the secret marriage, and that she should hold the certificate to make public if necessary.

Harris immediately promised to accede to her request, but the State divulged that he had gone to the druggist on the day following the receipt of Mrs. Potts' letter.

The State had thus found a motive for taking the girl's life -- one of the indispensables for convicting a person of first-degree murder -- that Harris unquestionably wished to be rid of her.

In yet another amazing disclosure, it had also shown Harris' character to be quite unsavory -- that he was already married at the time of his second marriage to Helen and the father of a child by his first wife who had left him in disgust.

It had also been revealed that he had twice attempted abortion upon Helen, although unsuccessfully. A physician's help was later required.

The prosecution divulged even more -- that Harris was a braggart concerning his powers over young girls, even to the extent of boasting about it to Helen's uncle -- and a schemer, in one instance actually proposing to a young woman that she marry some wealthy old man whom they could "put out of the way with a pill," and then live on his money.

Nevertheless, the State had to show HOW the girl had been murdered -- if murdered she was.

The prosecution demonstrated that there was no other medicine in the room occupied by Helen and her three roommates on the day of her death and that she had taken the fourth capsule that night.

Physicians testified that the autopsy had shown very little quinine and it is indisputable medical fact that quinine is as stable as morphine, and that if taken in EQUAL quantity should have been found in EQUAL quantity. Helen was alive several hours after taking the quinine and it should have been assimilated by the system unless taken in an excessive amount.

Finally, the prosecution showed that from two to four grains would be necessary to produce the symptoms exhibited by the allegedly murdered girl, and that the symptoms such as pleasant dreams and sensations the night of her death could have been caused only by morphine poisoning.

For all this, the case against Harris fell flat, because not only was the prescription corroborated by the druggist, but two additional capsules in the possession of Harris were also found to be harmless.

Testimony had shown that the prescription made out by Harris had been for six capsules, but that he had kept two of them himself. He had voluntarily surrendered the remaining capsules to the authorities; but to the surprise of those who were convinced he was guilty, each of the capsules contained four and one-sixth grains of sulphate of quinine and one-sixth of a grain of sulphate of morphine, exactly as the druggist had filled them and not enough to kill Helen.

The State, however, played its trump card. It showed first that Harris had not gone to the druggist to check on the prescription when Dr. Fowler had asked him to, and that even though he had told Dr. Fowler there had been no mistake, he had said to Mrs. Potts in speaking of the affair, "It was that druggist's terrible mistake."

Then it was revealed that shortly before Helen's death, the college class of which Harris was a member had studied poisons, especially opiates. A bottle containing sulphate of morphine had been passed among the students for examination. No check was kept upon the exact quantity of poison in this bottle, and the loss of a few grains could not have been detected by the eye. Here was the opportunity for Harris to have obtained the drug.

True, the capsules had been made in harmless proportions but they were of the type which is in two sections, one section fitting over the other.

It would have been easy for Harris to open one of the capsules, insert sulphate of morphine in sufficient quantity to kill, fit it together again, and put it into the box with the three others he gave to Helen.

If one or more capsules were left in the box after the poisoned one was taken, analysis would show them to be harmless and Harris would stand an excellent chance of escaping with his life.

The jury believed this view of the case as taken by the prosecution and pronounced the defendant guilty. The case went to the Court of Appeals which upheld this theory of the means employed to kill Helen Potts Harris.

A non-betting man, such as Harris must have been, would say at first that as Helen had three opportunities to take the poisoned capsule and leave a harmless one in the box, the chances favored her doing so.

But the man who follows the horses will tell you differently, that the odds were not three to one that Harris would get away with murder, very good odds to escape the penalty of such a capital crime.

He'll say that cold "merciless logic" would figure it this way: when Helen took the first capsule, the chances were three to one against taking the poisoned one; the second time they were two to one; and the third time, it was a 50-50 chance.

Of course, her death was inevitable, but the leaving of a harmless capsule in the box would doubtless have saved Harris' life. That is where the young man of science, had he but applied his mathematics, could have increased his chances of being acquitted by a substantial margin.

Undoubtedly, Harris had bolstered his cause by being able to produce the two harmless capsules which had been compounded at the same time as the other four. He had also strengthened his defense by being able to testify that his reason for returning them was that he did not think it wise to allow so much as a grain of morphine (the total amount of morphine in all six capsules) to be in a girl's school at one time.

But if, instead of retaining the two additional harmless capsules, he had given them to Helen along with the other four, the chances against her taking the poisoned capsule last would then have been much

greater, although they would not have been five to one, as the non-betting man would fallaciously reason.

As Shakespeare once said, "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool."

Harris was electrocuted, but asserted his innocence to the end. In a statement issued shortly before his death, he said he was willing to die as an example to other young men who might fall into evil ways with women.

These short true murder mystery narratives, carefully documented, are not mere accounts written in a detached manner. They represent the author's view of life and toward crime in particular. This is shown in a pithy style where every word counts for ten; yet the material included in each story is enough for a full-length novel.

A sardonic humor pervades these tales, and though the events depicted are on stage center, you feel Mr. Barshay is in the wings winking at you and pointing out inconsistencies of character and plot, which drawn from actual events again prove that "truth is stranger than fiction."

The stories end with quotations from English literature and, from their very choice and aptness, again mirror the mind of the author and his refusal to write in an objective way about the greatest of human crimes, the taking of another's life.

The Case of the Literary Celebrity

The history of murder trials shows that not infrequently defendants, whom just about everybody is certain to be guilty of first-degree murder, are acquitted -- because they are women.

The picture of a helpless, emotionally overwrought member of the "weaker" sex "victimized" by the police and the State's attorney -- who always apparently "is out to win the case to advance himself politically" -- has been painted so well by skilled and eloquent defense counsel that too often women have been freed who perhaps should have paid the supreme penalty for their misdeeds.

But in the case of Roland Molineux it was a man -- handsome, talented, genial and persuasive -- who so swayed public opinion by his unusual personality that a literal miracle of jurisprudence took place.

* * *

One evening in the year 1899 the New York Journal printed a front-page article entitled, "Police Want Roland B. Molineux." The law was on the trail of the man suspected of the fatal poisoning of Mrs. Katharine Adams and H. C. Barnet, former officer of the Knickerbocker Athletic Club of New York. Police intimated that they had an open-and-shut case against Molineux.

The very next morning, however, and to the consternation of a dumbfounded police sergeant, young Molineux calmly walked into a police station with his father and said, "Sir, I believe you want me."

After New Yorkers -- and the police -- had recovered from their surprise at this show of boldness, Molineux was arrested and promptly indicted. The result of the ensuing trial seemed a foregone conclusion, for the evidence against him was overwhelming.

On Christmas Eve the previous year Harry Cornish, the Knickerbocker Club's athletic director, had received an anonymous parcel in the mail, a bottle of Bromo-Seltzer. Taking it home with him a few days later, Cornish had given a dose of the patent medicine to Mrs. Adams -- a relative with whom he boarded -- when she asked for it to relieve a headache. Half an hour later she was dead -- of cyanide of mercury poisoning, which chemical analysis showed had been mixed into the medicine.

Cornish had tasted the medicine at the time he had given the dose to Mrs. Adams when she complained of its bitter taste, and was himself hospitalized. For awhile he hovered between life and death, but his hardy constitution finally pulled him through.

One of the physicians called in to attend Cornish had noticed a remarkable series of resemblances between the initial symptoms of Cornish's illness and those of another case a few months earlier. The physician recalled, too, that the other case -- that of Barnet who apparently had died of heart disease -- also involved a member of the Knickerbocker Club.

The doctor pondered every possible detail of that first case for possibly a still more vital link between it and that of Cornish. Then -- in a flash -- he remembered Barnet's speaking of some medicine which had been mailed to him!

Police, who soon obtained this information, calculated that someone who knew both officers of the club well -- probably a member of the organization -- and had some grievance against them both, had sent them the medicine bottles via the mail!

Copies of the handwriting on the label of the "gift" to Cornish had come to the attention of the superintendent of the club, who thought he saw a strong resemblance to the handwriting of a former club member, Molineux. Going through his files, the superintendent dug up some old letters of Molineux's.

The handwriting on the label and in the letters matched perfectly!

At the trial it was disclosed that Molineux had argued with Cornish, and that he had left the club after being unable to have the athletic director forcibly resign. It also was shown that the defendant had quarreled with Barnet. Thus, a motive for both crimes had been shown -- revenge.

As for the handwriting on the gift label, more than a dozen capable handwriting experts were marshalled to prove that it was Molineux's. That, in conjunction with the fact that the defendant was employed in a chemical factory and could obtain Prussian blue -- a substance needed to manufacture cyanide of mercury -- just about completed the case for the prosecution.

The final damning piece of evidence was medical testimony to the effect that Barnet had died not as a result of a heart attack but from poisoning. His body had been exhumed just before the trial had opened and it had been found to contain cyanide of mercury.

The defense offered no evidence and the case promptly went to the jury. After hours of deliberation, the jury found the defendant guilty of first-degree murder. Apparently, the affair was closed.

* * *

Molineux, however, thought otherwise. His manner throughout the months of his arrest and trial had been one of injured innocence. Some sympathy for him already had developed -- for no one had seen him mail the deadly packages. As for the handwriting authorities, it was well known that experts often disagreed among themselves. Now Molineux called on all his resources -- and they were many.

The elder Molineux had been a brigadier general in the Civil War and came from a respected and honored family. Everything, therefore, was done to make it appear that great harm was being wrought to the prestige of a name which had helped save the Union.

The public, too, was reminded of the manner in which Molineux had given himself up. Would a guilty man have done that?

Molineux already had exhibited a rather remarkable personality. Now he demonstrated talent by writing a book, "The Room with the Little Door," designed to arouse sympathy from New Yorkers, for it dealt with prison life in an acrimonious style.

Whether all this was responsible -- in part, or in whole -- for Molineux's succeeding good fortune cannot be accurately estimated; at any rate, Molineux showed that he also possessed more than the ordinary mortal's share of good luck.

On the eve of his execution, the Court of Appeals of the State of New York reversed the original verdict and ordered a second trial because of the admission of testimony about Barnet at the first trial. At that time defense counsel had objected vehemently to any reference to Barnet's death on the ground that the defendant was on trial only for the murder of Mrs. Adams.

Now four years after the murders of Mrs. Adams and Barnet, Molineux's second trial began. His book had aroused much sympathy for him, intensified by the tireless crusade in his behalf of his father -- a dignified, gray-haired hero of the Republic.

Also, Molineux had as his attorney one of the most distinguished men in the state, former New York Governor Frank Swett Black.

The current of public opinion now was rapidly moving in Molineux's favor. As a result, none of the evidence as to the death of Barnet was permitted in the new trial. Moreover, this time the defendant took the stand and made a credible witness.

Two important defense witnesses -- none of whom had testified at the original trial -- also appeared. A Columbia University professor testified that Molineux had been uptown with him at the time the package to Cornish had been mailed at the General Post Office. Then a girl, a postal clerk, followed the professor to the stand and affirmed that she had seen the deadly package in the Post Office. She had read on the parcel the words, "Knickerbocker" and "Cornish," adding that the man who had mailed it positively was not the defendant.

The seesaw had swung completely to the other side. In less than five minutes of deliberation, the jury acquitted Molineux.

After the trial Molineux rose to even greater prominence, but not because of any further disposition or propensity to send gifts through the mail. His gifts were now literary productions which finally placed his name in "Who's Who in America."

He not only wrote "Death Chamber Stories" and "Tales of the Tombs," but David Belasco -- noted Broadway theatrical producer -- staged his play, "The Man Inside." Strangely enough, the drama's theme was the redemption of a criminal!

But the final chapter in this amazing man's life was yet to come, and it was to be tragic. Soon after the New York opening of "The Man Inside," Molineux had a nervous breakdown and spent his last few years in an insane asylum, where he died at the age of 51.

* * *

In the words of Edward Hyde Clarendon, Molineux "had a head to contrive, a tongue to persuade," but did he, in addition, have the "hand to execute any mischief"?

The Case of the Dream Murder

There are those who laugh at the idea that dreams can reveal the unknown or that dreamers can obtain other-worldly knowledge through the intercession of spirits.

Amos Boorn of the village of Manchester, Vt., however, was able to convince his fellow townsmen that his dreams of murder were divine calls, summoning him to avenge the dead. Furthermore, these "visitations" actually brought about the conviction of his two nephews, Stephen and Jesse Boorn, for the murder of their sister's husband.

In 1812, Amos was living in Manchester as was

his brother, Barney, and the latter's three children: Stephen, Jesse and Sally.

Sally's husband, Russell Colvin, a shiftless individual loved by none but his uncle, Amos, for a long time had been suffering from a mental disturbance. This often resulted in sudden disappearances for periods of several months.

During May, 1812, he vanished again but the town's attention then, including the Boorns, was centered on the Second War with Britain. Besides, Colvin was not of much help on the farm, anyway. Therefore, no one seemed very much concerned about his absence -- that is, none except perhaps Amos.

After seven years had elapsed, however, people began to wonder whether anything had happened to Colvin. A year's absence was one thing; seven years, quite another.

It was then, according to the pastor of the town, the Reverend Haynes, that Amos stepped forward with his assertion that Russell Colvin's spirit had appeared to him three times in the early hours of the morning, saying he had been murdered by his two brothers-in-law, Stephen and Jesse Boorn.

The spirit also told Amos that Colvin had been interred in a hole on the Boorn farm. The pit had formerly been a storehouse for potatoes, but it had been filled in and a barn built on the premises.

Amos' dream aroused his neighbors, and when it was learned that this same barn had recently been burned, a number suspected that the corpse had been hidden underneath it.

The townspeople began to recall that things had never been happy between Colvin and the Boorns, one villager remembering Stephen and Jesse making harsh remarks about Colvin.

Another villager asserted that one of the brothers had declared Colvin to be dead; and insisted that the other brother had added: "We have put him where potatoes will not freeze."

In the light of Amos' dream, all these statements seemed to have a sinister meaning for the townspeople.

Speculation soon was followed by action. One day, led by Amos, a large gathering of the villagers marched to what had once been the potato hole and began searching for possible evidence.

To Amos' gratification a knife and button, belonging to Colvin, was discovered there.

Hardly had the townspeople caught their breath over the unearthing of this, than a dog digging nearby found toe nails, undoubtedly human!

The searching party, now thoroughly excited, explored the grounds still further and soon uncovered several bones.

Jesse Boorn was taken into custody but his brother, Stephen, had taken employment in a town in New York State about 200 miles away, and it would require more than a week to bring him back to Manchester by stagecoach.

Meanwhile, doctors discovered that the bones were not those of a man. The authorities, therefore, were ready to free Jesse when he was overheard muttering that Stephen had told him he had killed Colvin in a quarrel.

Stephen was brought back to Manchester and imprisoned with Jesse.

Stephen angrily protested his innocence and bitterly attacked his brother for accusing him of killing Colvin. Both men soon were arraigned on a charge of murdering their brother-in-law.

Colvin's teen-age son, Lewis, and a neighbor had both testified to a quarrel they had witnessed between Colvin and the two Boorns.

Silas Merrill, who was imprisoned in the same cell as the Boorns, said Stephen had made a confession, implicating both himself and Jesse.

Although this paltry "evidence" was hardly enough to convict the Boorns, even in 1819, the brothers were told that the State had a strong case against them and that convictions were certain. If, however, they made a clean breast of the whole affair, the State would favor their getting life imprisonment.

Finally, contemporary sources allege, in an almost wild state of mind, Stephen signed a confession, admitting that in May, 1812, he had had an argument with Colvin in the presence of Jesse. Stephen said he had struck him fatally on the head with a beech club. Moreover, he went into great detail, explaining how he had dug a grave in the potato hole and concealed the body there.

The grand jury charged that Jesse had aided Stephen in the murder.

As the time for the trial neared, public opinion in the county was overwhelmingly against the Boorns, and it was very difficult to find twelve citizens who had not emphatically expressed the opinion that they were guilty.

At the trial, says Wigmore in his "Principles of Judicial Proof," Lewis again gave details of the fight he had seen, jibing more or less with the description of the event outlined in Stephen's confession. Only this time Lewis added that he had witnessed Stephen beating his father and that Colvin had fallen.

The jury, after "deliberating" an hour, brought in a verdict of guilty against the accused. The throng, milling about the courthouse, cheered lustily.

The two were sentenced to die early the next year. But the brothers, who had retracted the confessions, steadfastly maintained their innocence.

The pendulum slowly began to swing in their favor. Some of the villagers now thought they had been too hasty in their judgment of Stephen and Jesse, especially the latter. As a consequence of this sudden feeling of compassion, a movement developed throughout the county to petition the State Legislature for a commutation of sentence.

The Legislature, taking heed of the rapidly growing number of signatures to this petition, did finally commute Jesse's sentence to a life term, but refused to alter Stephen's.

The case of the Boorns and of the dreamer whose dream brought retribution to two culprits seemed about over.

But in a New York hotel a few weeks before the scheduled execution of Stephen Boorn, a Mr. Chadwick suddenly sat upright in his chair. A gentleman near him had just been reading aloud an excerpt from the Albany Daily Advertiser which aroused Chadwick's interest as no other newspaper item had ever done before.

The quotation described the entire Colvin case and added that Stephen and Jesse "Brown" ("Boorn" was misspelled) had been convicted of murder.

Expressing great amazement at the turn of events in Manchester, Chadwick turned to his companion, a Mr. Whelpley. The former then declared that between five and ten years ago, a stranger calling himself Russell Colvin had come to Monmouth County in New Jersey, where Chadwick lived. The stranger bore two scars on his head and was in a state of mental derangement.

Chadwick remembered that the man said he came from Manchester, Vt., but although he was still living in Monmouth County, was unable to give a satisfactory account of himself.

Stirred by all he had heard and desiring to see justice done, Whelpley immediately went to Dover, N. J. There he met a farm worker, who had a fantastic notion that the farm on which he was employed, was his. The farmhand said his name was not Colvin, although he reluctantly conceded that years ago he did have such a name. He also said he never had been in Manchester despite the fact that he recalled some old acquaintances there.

Whelpley took the man back to Vermont where he was positively identified as Russell Colvin.

Stephen and Jesse were, of course, immediately set free, one narrator telling of Stephen being carried on the shoulders of the crowd and of his firing a cannon to celebrate his eleventh-hour escape from death.

Various explanations have been offered as to why Stephen confessed to a murder he had not committed. One is that he and Colvin did have a serious quarrel, involving a physical assault upon the latter. This theory holds that Stephen, seeing Colvin fall upon the ground, believed he had actually killed him --

especially since Colvin disappeared from Manchester at about the time of the alleged attack.

Another explanation is that Stephen, tortured in mind and body, had become convinced he would be judged guilty no matter what he said, and probably thought that if he confessed, the charge would be changed to manslaughter. Thus he would at least escape with his life.

As for Amos Boorn, Matthew Prior once said of dreamers, in a poem:

"Till their own dreams at length deceive
*em,
And oft repeating, they believe 'em."

The Case of the Avaricious Drunkard

A cat is supposed to have nine lives but human beings, unfortunately, are not permitted even the luxury of two -- reincarnation excepted. Thus, when a gentleman by the name of Winfield Goss gave himself the dubious pleasure of an extra body, contrary to the laws of nature -- and, incidentally, to those of the United States -- his future prospects were not very bright.

Nevertheless, had his second earthly nature been devoid of one bad habit -- excessive drunkenness -- he might have been permitted to continue enjoying the rare pleasure of a second life's journey on this earth. But his fatal human weakness was his propensity for alcoholic beverages. As a result, he was summarily denied any future license to continue with an additional body -- much to the consternation of his wife, brother and other relatives, but to the joy of several insurance companies.

The gentleman, however, who felt that Mr. Goss had no business continuing his existence with an extra body, was himself to learn -- but too late -- that his own body was one to have been more zealously guarded, especially from the hangman's noose.

* * *

In June, 1873, in the city of Baltimore, the climax to a long and bitter struggle between Mrs. Winfield Goss and three of the largest insurance firms in the country apparently had ended with a victory for Mrs. Goss. The Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York had been ordered by a jury to pay the unfortunate widow \$5,000, the full amount of the policy whose premiums had been paid regularly by her husband.

To Mrs. Goss the triumph was especially significant, for it was practically certain, as a result, that other litigation pending also would end in her favor. Trials against two other New York insurance firms and also Hartford's Travelers Insurance Company were about to begin. If victorious there she would obtain \$5,000 from each of the New York firms, and \$10,000 from the Hartford one.

To a nation which had followed proceedings of the

trial with an interest seldom shown in contested insurance-claim suits, there seemed little doubt but that Winfield Goss had indeed perished in a burning cottage near Baltimore on the night of February the second, 1872. For the chief and, in fact, only issue at the trial had been: was the charred body, which had been found in the ruins of a cottage burned beyond recognition, really that of Winfield Goss or that of an anonymous stranger whose corpse had been stolen from a medical college?

The insurance companies were chagrined. Together they had spent in attorneys' fees, court costs and detectives' fees more than the \$25,000 that it now appeared they would have to pay the widow anyway. Yet it seemed to them that no intelligent jury could gloss over facts which not only should deny Mrs. Goss any right to collect a penny of her insurance claims, but might even result in her being arrested as a possible accomplice in either a murder, arson or a deliberate attempt to defraud the companies -- or in all of these possible felonies.

Why did the victim -- if victim he was -- during the year previous to his untimely death take out three different insurance policies, the last just a week before the fatal accident?

How could he afford the annual premiums for his four policies, which would have amounted to \$600 a year, when his earnings were less than \$30 a week?

Was it a coincidence that on the very day before the fire Goss had closed his bank account?

As a further coincidence, was it not remarkable that his brother, Campbell Goss, and his brother-in-law, William Uzzerdook, both should have left the cottage at the same time to get another lamp to replace the one which suddenly had gone out -- and in that instance to have the fire suddenly begin, so that when they returned it was impossible to quell it?

Furthermore, although no trace of identification marks of the victim had been found near the fire by police, a number of days after their search Campbell Goss -- returning to the vicinity -- had been able to come upon his brother's watch and keys in the ruins.

The companies strongly urged that it was not beyond belief that Winfield Goss was still alive, and that he had been driven away from the scene of the burning cottage by his brother. In support of this theory, they presented evidence showing that Campbell had gone into the country from the area with a carriage the fateful night.

Mrs. Goss' attorneys were shocked by the imputations made upon the good name of the deceased and his poor, suffering widow. Had not the coroner found that the explosion of the lamp, which had given so much trouble the night of the fire, had been the cause of death? Had not the body been identified not only by the widow, his brother and brother-in-law but also by others close to the deceased?

Mr. Uzzerdook was a respected teacher of the

arts. Did the insurance firms dare to impugn his character?

The explosion may have been the direct result of an experiment, many of which Winfield Goss, an inventor, conducted at the cottage, where he was a tenant.

At any rate, the twelve men of the jury -- good and true -- had decided that the case for the defense (the insurance company) was not quite good enough.

* * *

Mrs. Goss had been likened to a buzzard by the insurance companies -- out for the blood of the stockholders of four highly respectable business organizations. Now, buzzards were to come to their rescue.

Soon after the close of the trial a farmer, driving near Jennerville, Pa., saw a number of buzzards fluttering near a fence. Exploring the ground nearby, he came across a man's corpse. The body eventually was identified as that of Winfield Goss.

Police soon learned that Goss evidently had been alive just a week before. It appeared that he had spent the night at a hotel in Jennerville with his brother-in-law, Uzzerdook.

The following evening, leaving the hotel, they had driven away together in a carriage borrowed from a stable; but Uzzerdook had returned at midnight -- alone. He paid for the use of the carriage and left.

The next day, the owner of the stable noticed that parts of the carriage had been broken the preceding night. In addition, an oilcloth was missing from the floor, where it had lain, as well as two blankets.

At the bottom of the carriage appeared blood stains!

Uzzerdook was taken into custody.

Although the Goss family helped him obtain some of the best legal minds in his defense, a first-degree murder conviction became inevitable because of one vital piece of evidence. A large ring, found between the cushions of the carriage used by Uzzerdook and Winfield Goss in Jennerville, was found to belong to Goss.

* * *

Why had Uzzerdook suddenly decided to murder his brother-in-law? The answer appeared to be that Winfield Goss' second body (he took the alias of Wilson) simply refused to behave like any other body but the original. The "first" Winfield Goss had loved to imbibe, and so had the second.

What with insurance company detectives hot on

his trail literally day and night before and after the Mutual Life Insurance Company trial, Uzzerdook always feared that in one of Goss' attacks of delirium tremens, he would reveal all the sordid details of the Goss' family's plot. For the insurance companies, after the first-degree murder trial and conviction of Uzzerdook, succeeded in proving that all their al-

legations had indeed been true -- and thereby saved themselves \$25,000.

As for Winfield Goss, to paraphrase a quotation from Sir Henry Taylor, "His liquor, his glory, was not only a poison to his mind, but became a peril to his body."

BERNARD BARSHAY BIOGRAPHY

Bernard Barshay began as a police and court reporter for the Hartford (Conn.) Times, during which time he got many of the ideas used in his mystery stories. These have been published in newspapers and magazine supplements from coast to coast and abroad, including Japan. He also was a reporter for the Washington Daily News, political columnist for the Associated Press in Trenton, N. J., then associate editor of North American Newspaper Alliance in New York.

At 28 he became perhaps the youngest syndicated writer in America and two years later joined the Journalism Department of Long Island University. Faculty advisor to the undergraduate magazine, "Review," Professor Barshay also helped select winners of the famed Polk awards for journalistic achievement.

More recently he has been writing, producing and directing for radio and television. In 1965 his "Mystery Stories" and "Stories for Everyone" ran for twenty weeks on WOSU in Columbus; and one of his shows was the premiere dramatic production of educational television in southcentral Ohio. Meanwhile in New York the well known "Spoken Words" program devoted its entire hour to a presentation of Mr. Barshay's best mystery stories on WNYC.

A native New Yorker, he received both his B. A. and M. A. from Brooklyn College. Then followed a Playwriting and Directing scholarship to the New School's Dramatic Workshop (N. Y. C.), studying under John Gassner, noted theatrical critic. In 1957, Mr. Barshay's name was included in the Directory of American Scholars. He divides his time between homes in New York and Pennsylvania where his wife, Helen, is a psychologist.

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