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### Guilty or Not Guilty?

#### THE MYSTERIOUS DRAMA OF MOUNTAIN VIEW.

THORNTON HALL, in Tit-Bits.) The murdered Mrs. Frederick Small, what was his object, and how he accomplished it? These questions are likely to remain for ever unanswered. There were few happier couples in the city, estimated for his business and loved for his amiability and gaiety. She was a pretty little man, with a charm which few could resist; and each was devoted to the other. Their life together seemed ideal happiness. They were just like a honeymoon couple, says one who knew them, "and loved to escape from their home to their charming bungalow at Mountain View, New Hampshire, where, remote from the world, they could spend an idyllic life together." And this rustic retreat was the scene of the tragedy. One October night the bungalow

burst into flames, and before the few widely-scattered neighbors could arrive on the scene, it was reduced to a charred, smoldering ruin. The fire was as mysterious as it was swift and destructive. It was not known in the district that the bungalow was occupied, as it was only used by the Smalls as a summer residence. A careful search of the ruins, however, revealed the dead body of a woman. At first it was thought that she had perished in the flames, but this supposition was quickly dispelled by discoveries which pointed to death by violence. Around her neck was a rope tightly drawn, sufficient in itself to account for her death. Her skull had been battered by heavy blows, and she had also been shot through the head. It was a case of murder—foul murder; and the victim of this terrible tragedy was none other than Mrs. Small.

#### An Inferno of Fire.

The dastardly crime had evidently been carefully planned. Mrs. Small had first been strangled; to make sure of her work, the cowardly assassin had then rained crushing blows on

her, and finally had fired a revolver at her head. Having thus made sure of his victim, he had set fire to the house, no doubt with the intention of destroying the body so completely by fire that no trace of his deed could be left.

But his cunningly-planned scheme was destined to failure. In the inferno of fire the body dropped into the basement—the upper part of it into a pool of water, which protected it from the flames; and thus it was found with the incriminating rope drawn tightly around the neck, and all the evidence of the broken skull and the bullet-holes in the head.

Who could have perpetrated this foul deed on a harmless woman who was beloved by all who had known her, and who seemed not to have an enemy in the world?

The question was asked in accents of horror, but none could answer. Certainly the last man in the world to suspect was the husband who seemed so devoted to her. The amazement may thus be imagined when, a few days later, it was known that Frederick Small had been arrested for the murder of his wife!

The news seemed impossible, incredible; for, apart from the fact that Mr. Small was known as an exemplary and devoted husband, it was known that he had returned to Boston several hours before the time of the tragedy, and thus could not possibly have had any hand in it.

At the inquest Mr. Small was in attendance. He wore a black frock-coat. Nervously his hands fumbled a light cap. He kept in his hands too—first in one and then in the other—his handkerchief. He sobbed repeatedly and tears flowed freely. He was evidently in a condition of severe nervous strain and grief.

Dr. E. W. Hodson testified to the finding of the body, which, he said, was partially clothed. "About the head were five or six thicknesses of white cloth. The cloth was pulled very tight."

In his opinion, death was due to strangulation. He identified the revolver which he discovered in the ruins of the bungalow; and as it was held up for the witness to see, "Small winced and turned his head away." As the result of the evidence at the inquest, a verdict of death by strangulation was returned.

When Small was brought before Judge Mills at the local court on the charge of murdering his wife, important evidence was given by a Mr. E. C. Connor, a local schoolmaster and insurance agent, who testified that two years earlier he had induced the prisoner to take up a \$25,000 joint life policy for himself and his wife.

When Small left Mountain View for Boston six hours before the fire was discovered, Connor had accompanied him. "During the journey," witness said, "I noticed nothing at all unusual in the prisoner's manner."

He was pleasant and cheerful, and showed no trace of nervousness or abstraction. There was nothing whatever to suggest that he had anything on his mind or conscience. I was with him at Young's Hotel, in Boston, when news came of the burning of his bungalow and the death of his wife, and we at once started back as fast as a motor could take us.

#### The Locked Door.

"During the return journey Small was very nervous, as was only natural in the circumstances. He talked much about his wife; said several times very sadly that he would not see her again, and mentioned that he always kissed her when he left the house." His general behaviour, in fact, was such as might be expected from an innocent man faced by such a terrible calamity. Small declined to give evidence at the trial.

A blackened iron lock was found in the ruins of the bungalow after the trial in the local court. The lock was all that remained of the outside door of the side-entrance to the bungalow. In it was found the key, which had been locked from the inside; thus proving that the door must have been locked by someone in the house, and not by Small after leaving it.

Thus the mystery of this terrible crime remains as inscrutable as ever, defying the cleverest detective brains to solve it. It is an impossible thing, apart from his affection for his wife and an entire absence of all motive, that Frederick Small could have had any hand in the murder of his wife, being that he left the bungalow six hours before it was seen to be in flames; and at the time was in Connor's company in Boston, more than fifty miles away.

But as Frederick Small was not the murderer, who was? What was his motive, and how did he accomplish his crime?

These are problems which might well baffle the skill of Sherlock Holmes himself; and to which it seems likely no solution will ever come.

#### Household Notes.

One of the best aids to health is few dishes at a time on the table and those perfect.

Add a pinch of baking powder to the meringue if you would have it hold its shape.

A flannel bag filled with hot bran is sometimes a good substitute for a hot-water-bottle.

Save the old stockings, wash them and cut into strips for the stuffing of porch pillows.

It does not require much skill to stuff dolls and they are much cheaper than when bought.

Geese for the holiday dinner should be laid on a bed of parsley and seasoned with cranberries.

Try steaming your puddings in individual molds—the same mixture will have twice the interest.

Gingerbread baked in little jam pans make a dainty cake which requires no sugar in the mixing.

Mix a little potato with the yellow turnips before mashing them if you would have them delicate.

When fresh meat is selected for stock, a piece of the skin or lower part of the round of beef or veal is best.

Hash when browned in butter before stewing will have a very nice

flavor and the gravy will be a good brown.

Always have the teakettle full and boiling. One does not know when a sudden demand will be made for hot water.

The art of making cornmeal mush is to not make it too thick. If it is too thick, the mush will be very hard when fried.

To sugar nuts, put one cup of granulated sugar into a saucepan with one

cup of shelled almonds or peanuts and stir constantly.

Pieces of stale cake broken and put on a dish with a canned peach, then covered with a thin cornstarch custard, makes a dainty dessert.

A jam pot can be run on the same principle as a stock pot, and into it can be put odd bits of stewed fruit or jelly, until there is enough to cook; then add an orange and sugar, cook until rich, and you have a delicious jar of jam.

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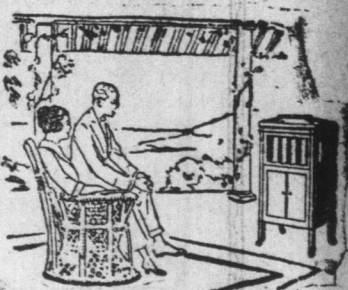
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