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THE LAUGH

How They Solved the Mystery

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Harley and Rogers, investigating lawyers, faced each other in some dismay. "A murder case," remarked Harley at last. "That's rather out of our line, isn't it?" "Just because no one has brought one to our doors. We've taken everything in sight so far," grinned Rogers. "Then we won't let this one get by, eh? Good thing it's vacation time. Now tell me what Dr. Hibbert had to say about the matter." "I found him waiting in the office when I arrived this morning. He said that he had a curious story to tell me. "It seems he has been attending a patient, Emery Armstrong, who lives in a dilapidated house on the Freeman road. Armstrong was a middle aged man of eccentric habits and lived alone with a hired man, a Swede of the name of Lindquist. "Armstrong had money or was reputed to be a miser, but his house appeared poverty stricken. He always paid the doctor with grumbling reluctance. "Armstrong had been sick for some time, nothing dangerous apparently, merely a low malarial fever. He was so much improved that Hibbert decided he need not come any more. "When he went to pay his last visit last night the man Lindquist met him at the door and said that his employer was unconscious. The doctor found Armstrong had been dead for several hours. Investigation showed that the man had been shot through the heart as he lay in bed. "The shot had penetrated bedclothing and all, and yet there were no powder marks from a gun pressed against the bedding. "Lindquist appeared stupefied when told that his employer was dead. He admitted that he had been away all night and had just returned. Hibbert came directly to us and has now gone to notify the police authorities." "Where is Lindquist?" asked Harley. "Oh, Hibbert left the man alone there. Rather an odd thing to do under the circumstances." "Of course Hibbert's reputation is impeccable," remarked Harley, reaching for his hat. "Coming with me?" "Yes, I'd like to beat the police to it. My car is below." The young lawyers went down to the street and entered Rogers' low swung racing car. In fifteen minutes they were turning into the neglected grounds surrounding the Armstrong house. They were quite extensive, and the masses of shrubbery furnished excellent hiding places for any one prowling around bent on mischief. The house itself, once a lofty colonial mansion with pillared porticoes and many wings, was in a tumbledown condition. There was no sign of life around the place, and Rogers could not help a sudden tightening of heartstrings when he recollected that the murderer might be concealed where he could pick them off one at a time as they entered the house. The same thought occurred to Harley, and he was glad they were both armed with automatic weapons. Rogers lifted the ancient brass knocker and rapped gently. If Lindquist was on guard he would answer at once. The knock reverberated as though through empty rooms. "What was that sound?" asked Rogers. "It sounded like a laugh!" Harley had heard it too. "Perhaps the Swede has gone insane," he suggested and turned the doorknob. The door opened halfway and then stopped. The two men entered and almost fell over the squat form of a man huddled on the floor in a pool of blood. "It is Lindquist—shot in the back!" muttered Rogers as he got up from his knees. "It has just happened," Harley touched his companion's arm. "The murderer may still be here," he breathed. Weapons in hand, they searched the lower rooms, finding only dust and decay, except in the kitchen, which bore evidence of being in daily use. On the second floor only one room was habitable. This was the one in which the dead man lay. This was a lofty chamber furnished in the black walnut "period" of forty years ago. There was every evidence of comfort here, the bookcases running over with volumes. The well equipped writing desk, with its scattered papers and fine lamp, de-

not connect her with the crime. "It is plain to be seen now how she accomplished her deed. She concealed herself here and made a small hole in the ceiling close to the hook in the middle of the plaster centerpiece. From this hook the lamp was suspended. "As for Lindquist, she probably surprised him and killed him as he tried to escape. If our friends, Harley and Rogers, had not traced the laugh it is very likely that she would have got one or more of us." As the mad woman was led screaming to the patrol wagon in which the officers had arrived Dr. Hibbert turned to the detective in charge. "How about your promise, Smith?" he asked. "My friends here traced the laugh." The detective shook hands with Harley and Rogers. "The next case you have, my friends," he said, "will have the backing of the detective bureau." "Not if I know it," grinned Rogers as they left the house. "But I'll tell you one thing—I don't want another murder case." "We'll turn down the next one," agreed Harley as the car sped toward the city. But it was to happen that the next case they handled touched them so intimately that they could not help being involved in the most mysterious episode of the decade.

reading noted that Emery Armstrong had spent much of his time in his own apartment. But the quiet occupant of the room! The two young men turned back the sheet and looked upon a noble countenance. A hasty examination of the room showed nothing to indicate there had been a struggle. The big bed stood almost in the center of the room, and it had been made up with the pillows at the foot, under a hanging lamp. "So he could read in bed," explained Rogers. "There was a book near his head when the doctor found him." At that instant there was a confusion below stairs. The coroner and his associates had arrived. Dr. Hibbert was with them. The two young men went downstairs and found them crowded around Lindquist's body. "Well?" asked Hibbert eagerly. Rogers shook his head. "We've only just come," he explained. "It's a clear case," said the coroner. "This man killed his employer and has committed suicide." "Shot himself in the back?" asked Rogers. "We found no weapon either." Harley and Rogers met a battery of unpleasant glances. Dr. Hibbert hastened to explain their presence on the scene, but the young investigators were given to understand that their presence was both untimely and quite unofficial. The coroner and his associates were eager to have the investigation to themselves and felt jealous of the interference of the two young lawyers. They scanned the theory of a third person being involved, though Rogers told them about the uncanny laugh which had followed their first knock upon the door. "You find the laugh, young fellow," grinned the police detective, "and I'll get the chief to appoint you on the detective bureau." "Done!" exclaimed Rogers confidently, and he withdrew with his partner, while the others went on upstairs. "How about the laugh?" queried Harley as they stood in the kitchen. "We must find the woman," said Rogers. "The woman?" "Yes. There's a woman somewhere around the place. Why? She has been down and made some tea. The pot is still warm. There are the dresses in a cup. Armstrong is dead, and Lindquist probably did not make the tea. Men fly to strong liquors in times of stress. This tea was being made when we entered the house." "Where is she?" asked Harley. "All the doors are bolted on the inside, even the door leading to the cellar." "We might try the attic. These back stairs will take us up there." Rogers led the way up a narrow, dusty flight of stairs. Once he paused and searched the treads with his flashlight. Plainly visible in the dust were the imprints of a small stocking foot. "We are on the right track," said Harley. The stairs ended in a small hall on the second floor, and, opening another door, they discovered a dusty flight winding upward. Now they walked cautiously, guns in hand. Under the low roof the attic divided into several rooms. Harley and his companions had not taken ten steps before they heard once more that wild laugh. They peered through a half open door. The room was directly over Armstrong's sleeping apartment. In the middle of the floor a board had been removed, and beside the hole knelt a woman. She was a small creature, bent with years and illness. Gray hair hung in tangled locks about her wrinkled face, and her large, dark eyes were wild and glittering as she lifted her head and regarded the two men. Then, without comment on their intrusion, she bent over the hole and appeared to look down. Rogers silently placed himself where he could lean over and look down also. He saw the lath and plaster of the bedroom ceiling and a white point of light that streamed up through a small hole. Below that hole was the bed where the body of Armstrong was found with a bullet in his heart, and the hole in the ceiling was right above his heart! Suddenly the hole was obscured, and, to Rogers' horror, he saw that the woman had covered it with the muzzle of a revolver. With a signal to Harley, they both leaped for her and tore her away from the hole. She fought like a tigress, and again and again her wild, insane laughter echoed through the house. The men below came tearing upstairs and secured the raving woman. It was Dr. Hibbert who identified her. "It is Armstrong's maniac wife," said the physician. "For years she has been confined in the Leeds asylum. I did not know she had escaped, and I did

not connect her with the crime. "It is plain to be seen now how she accomplished her deed. She concealed herself here and made a small hole in the ceiling close to the hook in the middle of the plaster centerpiece. From this hook the lamp was suspended. "As for Lindquist, she probably surprised him and killed him as he tried to escape. If our friends, Harley and Rogers, had not traced the laugh it is very likely that she would have got one or more of us." As the mad woman was led screaming to the patrol wagon in which the officers had arrived Dr. Hibbert turned to the detective in charge. "How about your promise, Smith?" he asked. "My friends here traced the laugh." The detective shook hands with Harley and Rogers. "The next case you have, my friends," he said, "will have the backing of the detective bureau." "Not if I know it," grinned Rogers as they left the house. "But I'll tell you one thing—I don't want another murder case." "We'll turn down the next one," agreed Harley as the car sped toward the city. But it was to happen that the next case they handled touched them so intimately that they could not help being involved in the most mysterious episode of the decade.

SOME FARM NOTES.

Never breed from immature stock. Salt is cheap. Give the cows all they care for. A good orchard on the farm is a fine form of life insurance. Raising dairy cows is one of the most profitable lines of farming. A henhouse without a south window is a mistake, and will not give satisfactory results. Many prefer two-year-old hens for breeders. At least have yearling hens well developed if they are the breeders. The stiff old broom is an excellent thing to clean out the feed troughs, and this should be done after every feeding. He who makes a success in the chicken business from the start will be the man who does things, not he who waits for a favorable opportunity. Wireworms sometimes destroy seed corn. It has been found that they can be destroyed by the following: Dilute arsenate of lead paste to the consistency of paint. Put the seed in it and stir, then spread out to dry before planting. How Much Silage to Feed. When cattle are fed on silage with no other roughage thirty pounds of the ration to each thousand pounds of animal is about the right amount a day, whether the herd is kept for beef or milk. This assumes that grain will be fed to balance the ration. Horses may be properly fed twenty pounds a day for each thousand pounds of horse. When cattle are fed on both silage and pasture fifteen pounds a day of silage to a thousand pounds of animal is a good ration. Sheep will safely take care of two pounds of silage a day for each member of the flock. FACTS ABOUT BARLEY. Barley hay fed with alfalfa makes a balanced ration. Barley is accused of causing abortion in cows to which it is fed, but this is a libel on a splendid grain. Those fine horsemen, the Arabs, feed it to their horses as a concentrate. It is rich in carbohydrates, but deficient in protein. Swine-growers who have tried it claim that it is the best single grain feed for hogs in a dry lot. It makes a fine crop for hogging off if the beardless varieties are sown, and it comes earlier than almost any other grain crop for this purpose. These winter varieties yield better than the spring varieties.—Farm and Fireside. Sunlight and the Greenhouse. The Massachusetts experiment station at Amherst has evolved a new type of greenhouse for use in the forcing of lettuce and cucumbers. It will be noted that every possible ray of sunlight is made use of in this type of construction. The slanting or northern side is boarded up and used for forcing rhubarb, and all the cucumber plants are trained vertically. Longevity of Horses. Gray horses are the longest lived, and cream-colored ones the most affected by temperature changes. Children Cry FOR FLETCHER'S CASTORIA

ANIMALS IN PAWN.

Tame or Wild, They Are Good For Loan In This New York Shop. Among the curious industries or sources of livelihood in New York city is an animal pawnshop. As you take a watch to an ordinary pawnshop to raise money on it, so you may take a watchdog to the animal pawnshop. Recently a man did this, getting \$50 on a dog that was easily worth \$50, the pawnbroker said. But he was a trick dog which had been taught to open doors. So in due time he opened a door and let himself out while letting the pawnbroker in. A well known animal trainer owns the shop. He takes camels, lions, elephants—any animals. There are no charges for interest on the loan, the only charge being for the keep of the animals, among which at almost any time are dogs, monkeys, bears, goats, cats, coons, foxes, parrots, canaries. At one time he had forty trick dogs in pawn. The profits arising from charges for feed and care are enough to make the institution pay. Once he had a lion in pawn which broke his chain in the stable and went roaring around, scared almost to death, and it was only after heroic efforts that they mustered courage to capture him. As a matter of fact the animal was a decrepit beast that had served his time in sideshows and was anxious to get away. Delaware's Northern Boundary. Why the northern boundary of Delaware should have been circular in form is often a source of wonderment. It came about in this way: After William Penn had obtained a grant of Pennsylvania he was desirous of owning the land on the west bank of the Delaware to the sea. He procured from the Duke of York in 1682 a release of all his title and claim to New Castle and twenty miles around it and to the land between this tract and the sea. A line that was the arc of a circle of a twelve mile radius was then run, with New Castle as a center. When the three "lower counties" on the Delaware became a state they retained this boundary.—Chicago Journal. St. George and St. Peter. Besides being the patron saint of England St. George is also patron of Moscow, on whose arms there figures the picture of the saint slaying the dragon. A famous Russian military decoration—the Order of St. George—which was founded by Catherine the second—also commemorates the saint in Russia. It may incidentally be pointed out that while St. George was adopted as the "military protector" of England early in the thirteenth century the patron of England had for five centuries previously been St. Peter, which helps to explain why more churches have in England been dedicated to that saint than to any other.—London Mirror. An Ingenious Device. When Sir Robert Perks' school days were over he entered the office of a firm of lawyers and worked very hard. It was no uncommon thing to find him reading law at 5 in the morning, and this often after he had been working late on the previous night. As a matter of fact, he made it an inflexible rule never to be in bed of a morning after 5. To enforce this rule he invented an ingenious device. This consisted of a long glass tube filled with water nicely balanced over his head and attached by a string to an alarm. At the desired hour the bell rang and awakened the sleeper. If within a few seconds he did not leap from his bed and avert the calamity the descending weight of the clock destroyed the balance of the tube, and down poured the water on his guilty head.—From "The Life Story of Sir Robert W. Perks." How Italian Soldiers Behave. The Italian soldier gets a very high character from Richard Bagot in his "Italians of Today." "To see an Italian soldier drunk or in any way misconducting himself in a public place is exceedingly rare—so rare indeed that it would create a very disagreeable impression on the witnesses. Indeed, the men of any one of the more important Italian regiments who misconducted themselves in a public place would, in addition to the severe punishment administered by the regimental authorities, undergo a very bad time of it at the hands of their own comrades."—London Globe. Her Idea. "Ma, your bank account is overdrawn." "What does that mean, pa?" "Simply this. You've written checks for \$13 more money than was in the bank." "The idea! If \$13 will break the bank I'd find another one to do business with. I supposed they had thousands of dollars on hand all the time."