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### SAYS THE RAMBLING REPORTER

Being the Highlights of Fifteen Years' Experience in Gathering the News

#### THE PECK MURDERS

A tip from a relative provided the New York World and the Grand Rapids Press with the biggest murder "scoop" ever recorded in American journalism.

The "story" was the amazing record of the Peck murders by Arthur Warren Waite, a Grand Rapids dentist. Mr. Peck was a multi-millionaire. Arthur Warren Waite married the Peck daughter, who, with her brother, was heir to the Peck millions.

One day Mrs. Peck died in New York, where Waite and his wife were living. The funeral was held in Grand Rapids.

Several months later Mr. Peck died.

#### Enter a Relative

About that time a distant relative of Mr. Peck came into the Grand Rapids Press office. I talked with him and took him to the managing editor. He said that Percy Peck, son of the deceased millionaire and his wife, had told him that New York officers were investigating the deaths of the elder Pecks and suspected Arthur Warren Waite of murder.

The managing editor after some more investigation sent Henry Tinkham, the Press star reporter, to New York, with credentials to the editor of the New York World, Herbert Bayard Swope, who died just recently.

Tinkham arrived in New York and consulted immediately with Swope. Swope in turn communicated with District Attorney Swan. Swan admitted that an investigation into the deaths of Mr. and Mrs. Peck was under way and that Waite was under surveillance.

#### Write "Story" in Advance

Tinkham wired Grand Rapids, where we wrote and had set up in type the story of the arrest of Waite for the murder of his father-in-law and mother-in-law. We had cuts made of all the principals in the case and made up a full page, to be printed as soon as Waite was arrested. The World did the same thing in New York.

For two days Tinkham kept a wire open from New York to Grand Rapids, waiting for the "story" to break.

It "broke" about 11 o'clock one noon. We shot our extra to the streets. So did the World in New York. The World in New York and the Press in Grand Rapids thus gave the first news of what developed into the most amazing murder case in the history of the New York police department, and gave it hours before any of the opposition papers.

#### Story of Case

To recite the details of the case as they developed chronologically would take too much space and require consultation of old files. But I'll give the highlights.

The whole case hinged originally on a "woman's hunch." The same doctor who attended Mrs. Peck in New York, just prior to her death, attended Mr. Peck. This New York physician came home one evening and said to his daughter: "I lost another case today. Mr. Peck of Grand Rapids died."

"Didn't his wife die recently?" asked the daughter.

#### "Yes," said the physician.

The doctor then told his daughter that the body of Mr. Peck would be cremated, as the body of Mrs. Peck had been.

With no more information than that, this daughter became suspicious. Acting entirely on a premonition, she sent the following telegram to Percy Peck in Grand Rapids:

"Am suspicious. Do not let them cremate your father's body until stomach has been examined."

#### Signs Fictitious Name

And she signed the telegram "K. Adams," an entirely fictitious name. Although Percy Peck had never heard of "K. Adams," he wired New York to forbid cremation and instructed relatives to send the stomach of his father to Dr. Victor C. Vaughan, poison specialist of the University of Michigan, at Ann Arbor.

Meantime police were instructed to watch the son-in-law, Waite, in New York.

When Dr. Vaughan wired to New York police that he had found arsenic in Peck's stomach, the police made haste to arrest Waite.

#### A Hot Chase

Waite, apparently suspecting on investigation, gave the police a merry chase through New York traffic in a high-powered car he drove madly to his fashionable apartment on Riverside Drive, a police car careening after him.

Waite leaped from his car, ran into the apartment, and when the police arrived just a moment later, was lifting a bottle of poison to his lips. The police stopped him, but only after he had drunk some of the poison. Emetics were forcibly administered and Waite's life saved, to be taken later in the electric chair.

Then followed an amazing series of events that led finally to a full confession by the young dentist, who proved to be one of the most hideous fiends ever apprehended.

Dr. Waite, with access to New York hospitals, had prepared numerous germ cultures. He confessed that he had fed the germs of several deadly diseases to his mother-in-law. Under the excuse of giving her a stimulant he injected germs into her veins. This killed her.

#### Almost Successful

He declared in a startling confession that he tried the same hideous practice on his father-in-law, but with no results. So he gave Mr. Peck arsenic and told his wife that Mr. Peck's last words were a request that his body be cremated.

How near Waite came to covering traces of this second murder is clear when you know that the body was actually on its way to the crematory when Percy Peck's telegram stopped the procedure.

Waite then confessed that if he had been successful in eluding suspicion and arrest after the murder of his father-in-law he intended to murder Percy Peck, leaving his wife, Mrs.

Waite, the sole heir to the millions. "Then," he said, "I would have induced her to will everything to me and would have killed her."

#### Long Investigation

The events leading up to this confession included investigation by police that led from Africa, where Waite had once lived, to Michigan. A corps of detectives operated in Grand Rapids. I was assigned to stay with one of them, Francis X. Mancuso, chief of the New York homicide squad.

The confession was not wrested from Waite until after a most exciting combing of two continents for evidence. The details of the investigation made front-page copy for every paper in the country for almost a month.

Waite was a well educated man, widely traveled, and a society lion in Grand Rapids. He used his knowledge of dentistry and medicine to gain the millions of the Peck family, in as daring and cool a wholesale murder plot as ever was concocted.

#### Hunch Beats Him

He failed only because a woman who had never seen him, his victims or his intended victims, and who knew none of them personally, had a "scoop" which she sent to the World and sent a telegram signed fictitiously and brought on the investigation.

Waite was tried and convicted. In his death cell he penned several remarkable verses of poetry, voicing a fatalistic philosophy.

His death in the electric chair ended one of the most amazing murder cases in the annals of American criminology.

W. H. K.

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