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The Leading Lady

(Continued From Page Five)

didn't mention Miss Saunders at all." "But she was—she had been a frequent subject of conversation between you?" His eyes, looking at Rawson, seemed to harden and grow more fixed. "We had talked of her—naturally, being in the same company. "Your wife and Miss Saunders were not very friendly?" "A fierce light rose in the fixed eyes, the nostrils widened. "What are you getting at, Mr. Rawson?" "Our business, Mr. Stokes. We're here to investigate a murder, and we can't spare people's feelings or facts."

"Have I shown any signs of expecting that? I've put myself at your disposal, my wife has. We're ready to give you any help we can, but I'm not ready to back up any 4-d suspicions that have been put into your minds."

"We're not asking you to," said Rawson. "But we know what was going on here before the shooting." Basset spoke up: "I'm the person that told them, Aleck. It had to be done. They had to be acquainted with the whole situation, and they got it from me. But they heard no lies, no suppositions—you know you can trust me for that."

Stokes' glance shifted to him. Through its savage defiance Basset could detect the torment of his soul, desperately betrayed to the one person he knew would be just. "Oh, I'm not blaming you," he answered. "You couldn't do anything else. And they can hear it all from me." He looked at the two men. "I'm willing to tell. I was in love with her, madly, like a fool, hounded her, dogged her footsteps. You've heard that. And my wife was jealous—so jealous they all could see. You've heard that, too."

The confession of his passion, remorseless in its bitter revelation, was horrible, like the tearing aside of wrappings from a raw wound. "Yes, we've heard it," muttered Williams. "She hated me. I don't know whether you've heard that, too, but I'm telling you and perhaps you'll believe what I say if it's against myself. She hated me, and I wouldn't let her alone. My wife was jealous. Do you see—is it clear? Oh, we're in a—had, my wife and I, but we're not in so bad as you're trying to make out. He jumped to his feet, the shine of sweat on his forehead.

"I don't see, Mr. Stokes," said Rawson quietly, "where you get that. We haven't made out anything yet." "Oh, I can see. We were the only people outside the house—that's enough to build a theory on. And motives—who had a motive? That's the way you work it out. Find a motive, fit one to me to it. My wife had a motive, that's sufficient. Don't ask what kind of woman she is, don't look any further, you have to get some one, and she's the easiest to get."

"Calmly! Seeing what you think and where you're trying to land us! But just let me ask you something. Do you happen to remember that there were five hundred people on the island that afternoon? Any kind of person could have been here on any kind of errand."

Rawson answered with a slight show of impatience. "Just leave our business to us, Mr. Stokes. You have to answer questions." "Oh, that's plain—questions all pointing one way. But there were other people on the island besides that crowd—besides us, who might have had a motive. Isn't anger a motive?" "Anger!" ejaculated Williams. "Where does that come in?" "Here on Gull Island. Oh, we've had more than jealousy. Rage and spite will go far. Take your eyes off my wife and me for a moment—look somewhere else."

Rawson's face showed no surprise, blankly inscrutable, but Williams wheeled in his chair and turned an expression of startled inquiry at Basset. Basset, in turn, was staring in astonishment at Stokes.

"What are you talking about?"

he said. "Rage and spite—whom do you mean?" "I mean Joe Tracy," was the answer. "Joe Tracy?" exclaimed Williams, looking vaguely about in a baffled searching of memory. "Who's he?" "Good God, Aleck! Basset made a step forward. "Get a hold on yourself—think of what you're saying. He wasn't here, he'd left the island before that."

Stokes paid no attention but went on, glaring into Rawson's expressionless face. "A 4-d devil of a boy with a record. Ask him," he pointed to Basset, "ask any of them what kind he was and how he acted here. It isn't I alone that saw it. Yesterday morning at the house he'd have struck me."

"Couldn't he be back? Aren't those boats to be hired at Hayworth?" He turned to Rawson. "I don't accuse him. I'm not like you, I don't jump at conclusions, point and say 'There's the murderer!' What I want is a square deal, and I won't get it till you've looked up Joe Tracy. Call your dogs back from the scent they're on and put them on his. Justice—that's all I ask—justice for my wife. For my sake. He stopped. His excitement seemed suddenly to die. He looked old and weary, his body relaxed, the fire in his sunken eyes extinguished in a profound gloom. "It doesn't matter what happens to me, I've thrown every-thing away—and Sybil's dead."

"That's enough for the time being, Mr. Stokes. You can go now, if we want you we'll call on you later!"

Without a word Stokes turned and left the room. When the door had closed on him Basset said: "He's out of his mind—Joe Tracy—when he knows he wasn't here."

Williams gave a bearish shrug. "Oh, pshaw, what's the matter with him? Easy to size up. Breaking down, losing his nerve. Whether he knows his wife did or not, he's just laying hold of anything to mark time. They go like that—I've seen 'em before."

Rawson, who had been standing with his hands deep in his pockets and his eyes fixed on the floor, moved to the chair. "Let's hear about this boy, Mr. Basset—all this anger and hate business he's been buzzing round."

He sat down and lit a cigar. Through the smoke he watched Basset with a narrowed glance as the director unfolded the story of Joe, the quarrel, and Sybil's accusation. "When it was over Rawson knocked the ash from his cigar meditatively looking at the crumpling gray heap. "Are you under the impression, Mr. Basset, that her story was true—that the boy had been spying on her?"

"I don't know. Of course, she was in a high-keyed emotional state that might engender unjust suspicions. On the other hand, you couldn't trust his word, and there was big money offered."

"And when you returned to New York you would have found out?" "Yes, I told him that."

"And he would have realized that it would go hard with him, where you were concerned, and with the rest of the profession?" "Yes, he'd know. She was very popular and there was a general sympathy for her."

Williams stretched and rose from his chair. "Well, it's all right to gather up everything, but it doesn't get us any further. If the boy'd been here, seeing what he was and how he felt, there might be something in it. But as he got out before the shooting it leaves us just where we were before. What do you think about going up and looking over top story?—routine business we ought to get through."

"Not now," Rawson moved to the door. "I'm going across to the mainland."

"Manland—what for?" "Look up some things—that boy's movements, for one. I'll take Patrick and the launch and send him back with me, Mr. Basset, and tell me which way Tracy was going."

Highway News

Notes on California Roads Furnished by National Auto Club

The following report of fishing conditions from the Fairview-on-the-Kern district is supplied by the touring department of the National Automobile Club: The best streams at the present time are Kern River, Tobias, Brush, Salmon, Dry Meadows, High, and South Creeks. The water is high and rolling the present time, and fishing will be better within another week, as the river will be clearing. The best bait is salmon eggs. The salmon fly is just appearing and is always best bait. Royal grama is always good. No limits are being taken, but many nice catches have been made to date.

Following is a report of fishing conditions near Bridgeport, Calif.: West Walker, East Walker, and Little Walker are very good for spinner fishing. The big fish are now running in these streams and make good sport. Robinson and Buckeye Creeks are good for fly fishing. Best bait is salmon eggs or worms; best fly, huckles. The water is high in the afternoons but fine in the mornings. Five- to ten-pound fish out of these streams are common. The lakes in this district are not good as yet.

Good progress is now being made on the paving of Mountain Springs grade in San Diego and Imperial Counties. Two miles of 20-foot concrete pavement is now complete and open to traffic, and in addition nearly three miles of half-width 10-foot pavement is in place. Work is now under way on the reconstruction of the state highway in San Diego county between La Mesa and El Capon.

The Smoki sundown ceremonial, which will be held on June 11 this year in Prescott, Ariz., marks the seventh annual ceremonial of this nature. A grandstand will be built for the spectators before a large arena, whose background will consist of towering granite peaks and lofty pine forests. A representation of a Smoki village will be built with its command home, Serl Indians, a remnant of a once large tribe of Indians who lived almost entirely upon sea food. This tribe was supposed at one time to have been cannibalistic, but there is no record of any fisherman having been used to satiate their appetites.

The passes on the Victory highway east from Salt Lake City are open to Heber, but closed between Fruitland and Duchesne. The road from Duchesne to Vernal is good. Rabbit Ear Pass is closed for 30 days. Tennessee Pass is now open, but muddy. Cochetopa Pass is open and in good condition. Salina Canyon is open.

Recent storms in Utah and Wyoming have made heavy, slow roads on the Lincoln highway east of Salt Lake City, especially between Coalville and Rock Springs. This condition will be eliminated within a few days. Good gravel is found east of Rock Springs. On the Lincoln highway west from Salt Lake City it is advisable at the present time to take the Victory highway to Wendover, thence to Ibapah, reaching the Lincoln highway at that point. Ibapah to Ely—good Lincoln highway west from Ely—good gravel.

Every ardent sportsman has his favorite spot for fishing, be it river, lake or sea, and the shorter the outing the more important it is that its enjoyment be not marred by a wrong choice of locality. The fisherman, whatever his favorite style may be, can find a great deal of satisfaction crowded into a short space of time in the waters of the Gulf of California. To make one fishing trip to the west coast of Sonora, Mexico, is invariably to live in anticipation of another. The route there from Pacific coast points lies through the Imperial Valley to Phoenix and Tucson, Ariz., over splendid roads. At Tucson every type of fishing tackle from the smallest trout flies to heavy sea outfits may be purchased. The first step is to secure the necessary alien hunting and fishing licenses at the office of the Mexican consul, and the second step is to procure everything that will be needed for the trip, including bedding, for the fishing is about forty miles from the nearest ranch. The route from Tucson follows the Ajo road over the divide through the Tucson Mountains and through the great Salinaro forest, thence down from the mountains and westward over an excellent road to the Robles ranch. The route then lies south to the Palo Alto ranch, where the graded road is left and from this point one follows a real country road where the hand of man is not so manifest. On the right lies the beautiful Baboquivari Mountains, with their lofty peaks. Soon one arrives at the little international post town of San Fernando, where inspection is made by Americans customs and immigration officers, before proceeding to Sasabe, Sonora. Here the Mexican officials issue immigration and customs permits for the duration of the trip. This little town consists of only a few thatched adobe houses in a narrow canyon, but owes its importance

to the fact that it is the first stopping place where the eighteenth amendment is not observed. From this point the route lies over 70 miles of fairly good road through sparsely populated country to the old mining town of Altar, beautifully located among tall date palms and green groves of citrus fruits. Here one interviews the game warden, who will extend information relative to hunting or fishing. Twelve miles from Altar is the last town, Pitiquito, where delicious oranges can be purchased very reasonably. It is advisable to secure a supply of fruit and fresh vegetables at this point, for, with the exception of a few small ranches, this is the last point of civilization on the trip. The route leads south into some small ranges of mountains, in almost any of which it is possible in a very short time to secure ample supplies of venison and wild hog. A short distance beyond, at Pique Mountain, deer can be killed from the automobile or within short walking distance. This mountain is very thickly stocked with black-, white-, and fan-tail deer, and on the peaks with mountain sheep. The Mexican wild hog, mountain lion, and Mexican leopard are also plentiful. From this point the gulf is viewed for the first time, beyond a gradually sloping plain which is at times the feeding ground of large herds of antelope. The next stop is Fort de Libertad, the base of operations for prospective fishermen. The camp ground is above the beach on an elevated dirt flat with a shallow well which yields a fair supply of somewhat salty water. There are no buildings with the exception of one small shack, but a hot bath is available by digging one's own bathtub in the sand near a mass of rock just in front of the well. At low tide this gradually fills with water coming out of the sand at a temperature of about 100 degrees. The variety of fish to be caught here is not as great as in some waters, but they average in size with the best. The most common form is the cabrilla, or rock bass, which averages from 10 to 15 pounds in weight and is an excellent food fish. The channel bass is also common, and weighs from 20 to 300 pounds. The silver bass, or mero, affords great sport. They run in schools of uncountable numbers and can be located far out from the shore by the hundreds of gulls and pelicans following them. The entire school breaks at one time, and the fisherman who happens to be in their midst in a small boat receives a shower bath, and not infrequently the oars are knocked completely out of the water. When such a break is made the sea birds dart down and seize the smallest that are injured. The bass generally feed on smelt or any other small school fish, which they follow for miles. Aside from storms, fishing is only spoiled in these waters by a school of porpoise, or a shark. This part of the gulf is frequently visited by the Seri Indians, a remnant of a once large tribe of Indians who lived almost entirely upon sea food. This tribe was supposed at one time to have been cannibalistic, but there is no record of any fisherman having been used to satiate their appetites.

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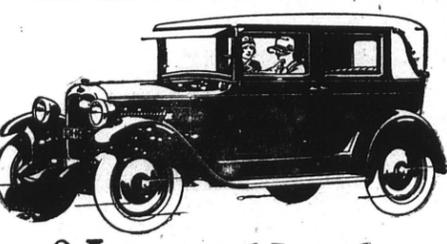
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