

SCOTLAND YARD

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Scotland Yard by Joseph Gollomb

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JOSEPH GOLLOMB

**SCOTLAND
YARD**

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:: *By* JOSEPH GOLLOMB ::

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SCOTLAND YARD

I

EVERY schoolboy knows Scotland Yard from fiction. Which means that the schoolboy and all other lovers of fiction about that world-famous organisation of criminal-hunters have missed the better story. By a stroke of good fortune it has been my privilege as a writer to see from the inside the Scotland Yard of fact; to talk intimately with its chiefs; to study at close range its crime-hunting machine and watch it work on actual cases; to look at photograph albums of famous crimes—a glimpse that haunted my sleep for nights; to spend hours in its gloomy "Black Museum"; to delve into its private records and borrow some of them for my work in writing these pages. And the story of the real Scotland Yard needs no colouring to give it richer glamour than fiction does.

Let us put an actual case into the Scotland Yard machine and study its parts and workings by the way it spun a web of steel from the merest gossamers of clues. It began with a "bobby," best-known, best-loved policeman in the world, the bluecoat of London. He, too, is part of Scotland Yard, its uniformed arm.

This particular bobby patrolled a residential section of London, neither rich nor poor nor striking in any way. Which was the reason an elderly spinster, Mary Ennis, chose to live there. She had a reason for living in a colourless way in a colourless part of London; it developed later.

She had a small three-room flat in the upper story of a small brick house in a street full of small brick houses exactly like hers. The ground floor and basement she presumably tried to rent out; but the bobby who patrolled that street decided that she was difficult to please; for he observed that while quite a number of people seemed ready to rent the place, she chose none of them.

She was apparently all alone, and nobody called on her socially; and only a day servant and delivery boys ever set foot in the

house. The bobby on the beat learned these things just as a woman, by everyday study of her face, learns when the first wrinkle arrives. He knew every house on his beat and the familiar aspect of its everyday fronts.

Early one morning when he came on his beat he noticed a slight difference in the aspect of Mary Ennis's house. From the window of the upper story where she lived fluttered the end of a curtain. It was not a startling thing to observe. But it had been raining and, putting this together with the fact that Miss Ennis never kept this window open even on clear nights, the bobby started thinking, which London bobbies do so often that their fame is not surprising.

When later, therefore, he noticed that Miss Ennis did not take in her morning newspaper and bottle of milk, which it was her habit to take in exactly at half-past eight every morning, he decided to ring her bell. No answer. She may have gone away for a trip, of course. But there was the curtain fluttering in the upper window.

The bobby then tried the front door, the basement door and the back door to her house. He noticed that she had an exceptional number of locks on her doors and very good ones, for all of them held well--except one. This was on the door leading to the basement in the rear.

The London bobby, like all British police, has a traditional respect for the sanctity of the home against invasion of any kind; and this bobby consulted his sergeant before entering Mary Ennis's house. When he and his sergeant did enter they found Mary Ennis strangled in her bed, a little wall safe of exceptional thickness burned open with an oxy-acetylene torch, its contents looted and the front window open with the curtain blowing.

There was no telephone in the room, so the sergeant remained on the spot while the bobby sprinted to the nearest police box and called up "Scotland Yard," as the world knows it, "New Scotland Yard," as it is semi-officially known, and "C.I.D." or the "Criminal Investigation Department," which is its official name. With a brief but telling description the bobby outlined what he had seen, and thereby gave C.I.D. an idea of what men and paraphernalia were to be hurried in a little green motor-car to the house of Mary Ennis.

A quarter of an hour later there arrived in Mary Ennis's flat a divisional inspector, a finger-print man, a photographer

and a specialist in a certain category of crime-hunting. The four men busied themselves for several hours and found the following :

Persons unknown had skilfully picked the rear basement door lock ; stolen up the stairs ; scotched an up-to-date burglar alarm ; strangled the lone occupant—not without a powerful struggle, however ; burned out the safe door ; opened the front window for some unknown reason ; robbed the safe ; stopped for a bite of refreshment in her little kitchen ; and departed the same way they had come, leaving apparently little or nothing for the police to work on. This meant that the job was done by practised hands wearing gloves.

The hunt for clues seemed barren at first. The finger-print man sprinkled his black, white and grey powders on every door-knob, door edge, lintel, table, window-frame, on walls and closet panels, everywhere a man was likely to rest his hand even for an instant.

He worked away with his delicate camel's hair brush, hoping at every effort that there would remain some fine lines of powder, which, delicate though they are, often hang careless criminals. There were finger-prints enough ; but a glance at the finger tips of the mute victim told the Scotland Yard men the imprints were hers.

They did get, however, shreds of imprints that puzzled them. These were photographed and left for further study at the Yard. Photographs were also taken of the marks of a jemmy used on the basement lock. The method of forcing entrance into the house was carefully noted.

It would have puzzled an onlooker to see the eagerness with which the detectives studied, too, what the criminals ate from Miss Ennis's larder, in the meal they calmly made themselves after strangling her.

Then on the rug before the bed was found a bit of dried clay, such as would be left by the stamping of a muddy shoe.

This was not a rich haul for the Scotland Yard men ; but they hurried back with it and set the machinery of C.I.D. to work on it. Their chemical experts analysed the bit of dried clay to determine where the mud came from. It was not the mud of London's sidewalks, nor of the bit of garden through which the unknown criminals had passed to enter Miss Ennis's house.

From this it was deduced that the shoe from which the bit of clay had dropped must have pressed hard into a bed of it