

Model of a Thousand Murders

By

Robert W. Sneddon

Locked Doors, an Open Window Fronting on a Canal and a Dead Man Present a Clueless Crime to the Baffled Parisian Police

IN May, 1835, occurred an incident by which detective fiction writers have profited.

One night the servant of a certain Monsieur Loubet, who had been having her afternoon off, unlocked the apartment door and went in with a cheerful, "Here I am, *monieur!* Now you shall have your supper."

But Monsieur Loubet, whom she saw sitting in his easy chair at the open window overlooking the canal, made no answer, nor did he turn his head. The maid went closer, then suddenly screamed. Loubet was dead with a crimsoned shirt front.

The police of Paris were soon on the scene. It was plain that Loubet had been stabbed to the heart by knife or dagger, but of the weapon there was

not a sign, though the dead man had a number of old sabers and rapiers on his walls. None



Then he leaned out and gazed at the dirty waters of the canal

of these bore any trace of blood. For a little while the question of suicide was debated. The door had



been found locked by the servant. No one had apparently entered. Yet if the dead man had killed himself where was the weapon?

The final conclusion arrived at was that someone had entered and killed Loubet—someone who had made no noise—who had struck the blow silently, swiftly. There had been no struggle.

The concierge declared that about six o'clock Loubet had a visitor. A knife-grinder who called once a month to sharpen his cutlery had gone upstairs. She had not seen him again.

The knife-grinder was arrested, and as his reputation was none too good it looked as if he were headed for the guillotine.

He admitted having gone up to see Loubet at about five thirty, but said he knocked and knocked without getting any reply and finally left without seeing him.

The police went over the knife-grinder's route and time schedule and found he had told the truth. Nevertheless he might have killed Loubet between five thirty and six o'clock, about an hour before the maid got back.

Unfortunately for the police, medical experts thought to hold an autopsy on the dead man. In his stomach they found his lunch, notably a dandelion salad, eaten at noon, hardly digested, and the time of death was fixed as having taken place between one thirty and two thirty. And as at this time the knife-grinder was five miles away and busy on a big job, he could not be the killer. He was set free to trundle his machine and cry "Knives and scissors to grind."

Chagrined and puzzled, the police returned to the house of death. They questioned every tenant for hours. They almost had Madame Mocquet, in hysterics.

"You must remember something more—something you have forgotten. Now think back. Did nothing happen that afternoon that was odd or queer?"

Madame shook her head. Then all at once her face lit up.

"Zut—I forget! I was sitting at my window, about three o'clock, when suddenly there was a flash in the sun—and plop! I put my head out. I see nothing."

The Prefect of Police scowled, then his face as suddenly lit up. He hastened to the window. He screwed his neck and looked up to Monsieur Loubet's window overhead. Then he leaned out and gazed at the dirty canal.

He drew in his head and snapped instructions.

"At once—a drag—drag the canal bottom. Do not stop till you have found the weapon which killed Monsieur Loubet."

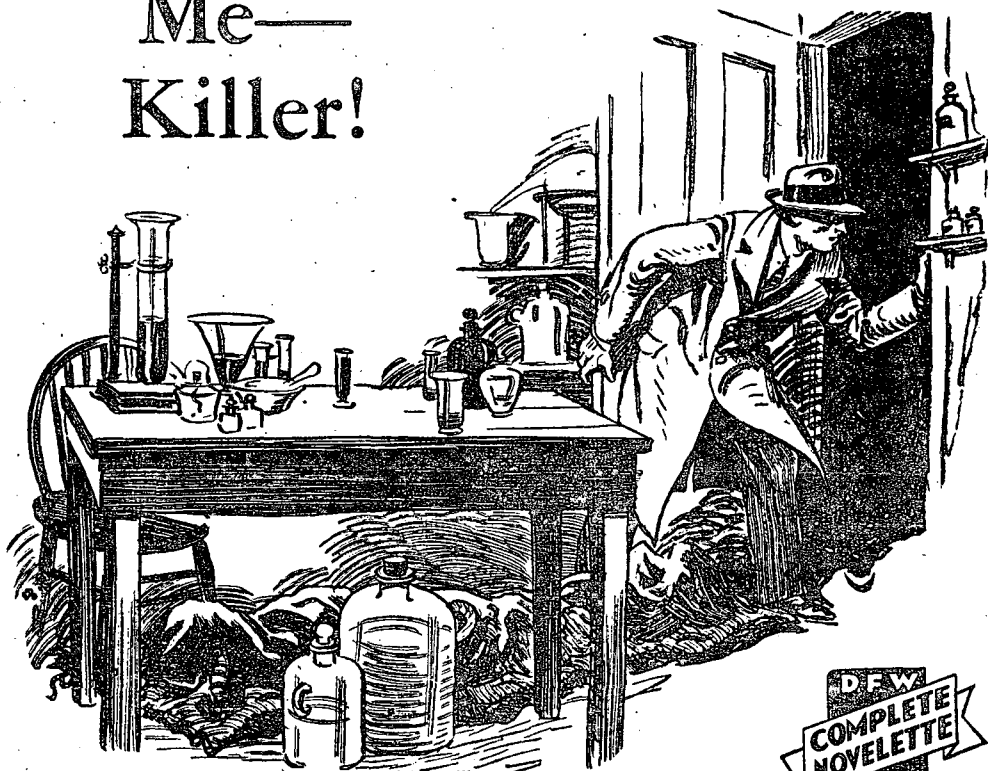
The drag brought up from the mud a Javanese dagger. Attached to it by a cord was a heavy weight.

Loubet had planned his own death to follow that of his wife, whom he was mourning deeply. Only being highly religious he feared that if a suicide he would not be given burial beside his wife.

He arranged his end to look like murder. When he plunged the dagger into his heart the weight attached by the cord was dangling out of the window. Once he had taken his hand from the hilt the counterpoise drew the dagger from the wound and, falling, carried it to the bottom of the canal, where but for the flash seen by Madame Mocquet it might have lain for all time, with the manner of Loubet's death unsolved.

Since then others have tried the same trick, both in fiction and reality, but to Monsieur Loubet goes the credit of the invention.

Me— Killer!



A terrific fear seized Arnold

DEFW
COMPLETE
NOVELETTE

By Frederick C. Painton

CHAPTER I

Staggering News

THE instant I entered the dining room I felt the tenseness that gripped my father and mother. I had a sense of suspense, a premonition of something tremendous about to happen.

Mother was seated at the table, looking very old and sad. Ever since I had been kicked out of college for killing a professor's three-prize colliers in an unusual nerve experi-

ment, she had grown older, slowly dehydrating and shrinking up until she looked eighty instead of sixty-four. Father was standing in the center of the floor.

Why Did This Killer Plead for a Speedy Trial and Capital Punishment? And Why, Despite His Crime, Did the Law Turn a Deaf Ear to Him?

His bald skull was pink with suppressed fury. Beneath his shaggy white eyebrows his eyes flashed, and his thin mouth was compressed as if he had arrived at a decision and intended to hold

to it no matter what happened. I attempted to carry it off jauntily: "Splendid luck with the basal metabol-