

A SCHOOL OF DETECTIVE YARNS NEEDED

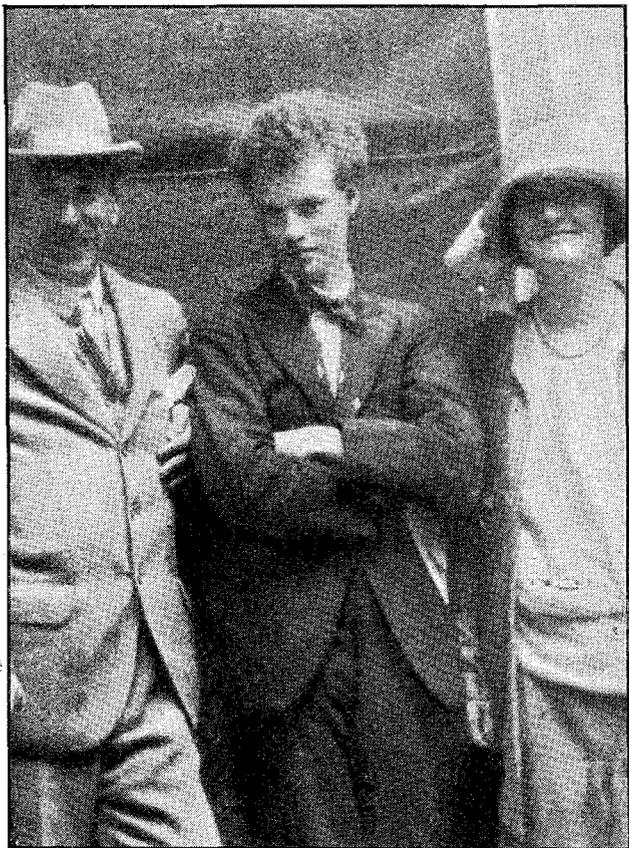
STORIES OF MURDER AND MYSTIFICATION do not get their proper treatment at the hands of reviewers, complains one of our producers of this line of literary wares, Miss Carolyn Wells. Her case is supported by a distinguished devotee of the genre in England, one who is known to read them voraciously and grieve because he can not produce them—Mr. G. K. Chesterton. Miss Wells thinks that detective stories are badly reviewed because they are obviously given to people who do not like them, and so “the nature of the technique really required in such a tale is never adequately discusst.” Mr. Chesterton takes up this point in his *causerie* in the *Illustrated London News*, and declares it “all the more curious that the technique of such tales is not discusst, because they are exactly the sort in which technique is nearly the whole of the trick.” Moreover, this is one of the few forms of art in which reviewers “could to some extent be guided.” Among our activities to teach the unteachable forms of art, Mr. Chesterton finds an anomaly in the general neglect of this one. And—

“It is all the more strange that nobody discusses the rules, because it is one of the rare cases in which some rules could be laid down. The very fact that the work is not of the highest order of creation makes it possible to treat it as a question of construction. But while people are willing to teach poets imagination, they seem to think it hopeless to help plotters in a matter of mere ingenuity. There are text-books instructing people in the manufacture of sonnets, as if the visions of bare ruined quires where late sweet birds sang, or of the ground-whirl of the perished leaves of hope, the wind of death’s imperishable wing, were things to be explained like a conjuring trick. We have monographs expounding the art of the Short Story, as if the dripping horror of the House of Usher or the sunny irony of the ‘Treasure of Franchard’ were recipes out of a cookery book. But in the case of the only kind of story to which the strict laws of logic are in some sense applicable, nobody seems to bother to apply them, or even to ask whether in this or in that case they are applied. Nobody writes the simple book which I expect every day to see on the bookstalls, called ‘How to Write a Detective Story.’”

Chesterton admits he has gone no further than discovering how not to write one. And his preliminary principle is that “the secret should be simple.” In illustration of this we encounter the approved Chestertonian extravagance which, in his very personal literary style, achieves some of the same startling effects as his frequent use of paradox:

“The whole story exists for the moment of surprize; and it should be a moment. It should not be something that it takes twenty minutes to explain, and twenty-four hours to learn by heart, for fear of forgetting it. The best way of testing it is to make an imaginative picture in the mind of some such dramatic moment. Imagine a dark garden at twilight, and a terrible voice crying out in the distance, and coming nearer and nearer along the serpentine garden paths until the words become dreadfully distinct; a cry coming from some sinister yet familiar figure in the story, a stranger or a servant from whom we subconsciously expect some such rending revelation. Now, it is clear that the cry which breaks from him must be something short and simple in itself, as, ‘The butler is his father,’ or ‘The Archdeacon is Bloody Bill,’ or ‘The Emperor has cut his throat,’ or what not. But too many otherwise ingenious romancers seem to think it their duty to discover what is the most complicated and improbable series of events that could be combined to produce a certain result. The result may be logical, but it is not sensational. The servant can not rend the silence of the twilight garden by shrieking aloud: ‘The throat of the Emperor was cut under the following circumstances: his Imperial Majesty was attempting to shave himself and went to sleep in the middle of it, fatigued with the cares of state; the Archdeacon was attempting at first in a Christian spirit to complete the shaving operation on the sleeping monarch, when he was suddenly tempted to a murderous act by the memory of the Disestablishment Bill, but repented after making a mere scratch and flung the razor on the floor; the faithful butler, hearing the commotion, rushed in and snatched up the weapon, but in the confusion of the moment cut the Emperor’s throat instead of the Archdeacon’s; so everything is satisfactory, and the young man and the girl can leave off

suspecting each other of assassination and get married.’ Now, this explanation, however reasonable and complete, is not one that can be conveniently uttered as an exclamation, or can sound suddenly in the twilight garden like the trump of doom. Any one who will try the experiment of crying aloud the above paragraph in his own twilight garden will realize the difficulty here referred to. It is exactly one of those little technical experi-



Courtesy of "The Musical Courier."

ENGLAND'S REPRESENTATIVES AT SALZBURG.

Anthony Asquith, youngest son of the ex-Prime Minister (center), his sister, Princess Bibesco, and Arthur Bliss, the composer. The Asquiths listened to all but one piece in the twenty hours of modernist music.

ments illustrated with diagrams with which our little textbook would abound.”

He shows us, furthermore, that “the *roman policier* should be on the model of the short story rather than the novel.” We read:

“There are splendid exceptions: ‘The Moonstone’ and one or two Gaboriaus are great works in this style; as are, in our own time, Mr. Bentley’s ‘Trent’s Last Case’ and Mr. Milne’s ‘Red House Mystery.’ But I think that the difficulties of a long detective novel are real difficulties, tho very clever men can by various expedients get over them. The chief difficulty is that the detective story is, after all, a drama of masks and not of faces. It depends on men’s false characters rather than their real characters. The author can not tell us until the last chapter any of the most interesting things about the most interesting people. It is a masquerade ball in which everybody is disguised as somebody else, and there is no true personal interest until the clock strikes twelve. That is, as I have said, we can not really get at the psychology and philosophy, the morals and the religion, of the thing until we have read the last chapter. Therefore, I think it is best of all when the first chapter is also the last chapter. The length of a short story is about the legitimate length for this particular drama of the mere misunderstanding of fact. When all is said and done, there have never been better detective stories than the old series of Sherlock Holmes; and tho the name of the magnificent magician has been spread over the whole world, and is perhaps the one great popular legend made in the modern world, I do not think that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has ever been thanked enough for them. As one of many millions, I offer my own mite of homage.”

RELIGION-AND-SOCIAL-SERVICE

THE BUTCHERY OF CHRISTIANS IN ASIA MINOR

ATTACKING AND BUTCHERING CHRISTIAN WOMEN in the open fields and standing children in rows to see how many little heads a bullet will go through before its force is spent is said to be the Turks' chief by-play in their victorious sweep toward Smyrna. And it has been left to a Jew—Henry Morgenthau—we are told, to voice the most urgent appeal to Christian nations to protect the Christian minorities in Asia Minor. In successive battles the Turkish Nationalists, under Mustapha Kemal, have beaten the Greeks back toward Smyrna and the sea, annihilating one army, it is reported, and seriously jeopardizing another. Torture and massacre are reported from several sources to be the lot of the Christians left in the wake of the retreating Greek armies. "Slowly, to an accompaniment of the most ghastly torture of red massacre and white massacre," says *The Christian Century* (Undenominational), "all the Christian minorities in the land where St. Paul planted his little churches are being exterminated; and we have failed to produce a public opinion to rebuke and stay it. A delegation of Greeks now in America in behalf of their tormented and slaughtered people—doomed by the august Council to go once more under Turkish rule—tell of scenes that sicken the body with their filth and beastliness, and terrify the soul with their shame. How can we wear the name of humanity, to say nothing of the name of Christ, and remain unmoved by such things!"

None appears more deeply affected by the tragic plight and peril of the Christian minorities in Asia Minor than Henry Morgenthau, a Jew, former American Ambassador to Constantinople, who, in an impassioned interview with a correspondent of the London *Daily Telegraph* on the Near East crisis, declares that the Turks' "devilish scheme" for the annihilation of other races must be checked. "I wonder," the interviewer quotes him, "if 40,000,000 Christians in full control of the governments of Europe and America are again going to condone these offenses by the Turkish Government. Will they, like Germany, take the bloody hand of the Turk, forgive him and decorate him, as Kaiser Wilhelm has done, with the highest orders?"

"Will outrageous terrorizing, cruel torturing, driving of women into harems, debauchery of innocent girls, the sale of many of them at eighty cents each, the murdering of hundreds of thousands and the deportation to and starvation in the desert of other hundreds of thousands, the destruction of hundreds of villages and many cities, the wilful execution of this whole devilish scheme to annihilate the Armenian, Greek and Syrian Christians in Turkey—will all this go unpunished?"

"Will the Turks be permitted, aye, even encouraged, by our cowardice in not striking back, to continue to treat all Christians in their power as unbelieving dogs, or will definite steps be promptly taken to rescue permanently the remnants of these old civilized Christian peoples from the fangs of the Turk?"

The Turks should be pushed back into Asia, where they belong, says Mr. Morgenthau, and Constantinople, where the majority of the population is non-Turkish, "should be taken under the protection of the League of Nations and under the Allies who have defeated Turkey." The opportunity now presented should be accepted at once, he declares, for "if the European countries have control of Constantinople they can eventually influence the Turks and keep them in check, because the possession or non-possession of Constantinople determines the status of Turkey. If she obtains Constantinople, she becomes a world Power again. What sensible person wants Turkey to be a world Power again, with increased powers for the making of international mischief?"

Americans are familiar with the methods of the Turks from reports of their own "devoted Red Cross workers" in Asia Minor, says the *Telegraph* in commenting editorially on the interview, "and no one speaks with greater authority on this head than Mr. Morgenthau. He emphasizes with earnestness and even with passion the plain duty of the civilized world toward the Turk."

Appalled by the spectacle of the Turks' inhumanity, several Americans are reported to have gone mad and committed suicide—one, a member of the American Consulate, after he had watched the drowning of hundreds of children on the Black Sea Coast. Such is the information brought by the Rev. S. Ralph Harlow, Professor of History and Sociology in the American College at Smyrna. In an interview printed in the *New York Times* he reports the Turks as declaring that they will abolish all Christian and American institutions in Asia Minor, and, he says, "they are rapidly doing it." He proceeds:

"The cruelties and tortures that are practised on the Greeks and Armenians are beyond words. The only man in the world whose voice stands out against them is a Jew, Henry Morgenthau. He offered to find the means to transport all the Armenians from the country, but the Turks would not let him—they wanted to kill them.

"The Turks are so pleased with their slaughter that they even have official pictures taken of the tortures and massacres. I had a lot of these official pictures which I gave to an American Consul to send to Washington. They show the Turkish Governor of a province, a Turkish General and the high priests and other officials, dressed in their best, smiling and looking on at the executioner performing his tortures below them. Think of a people who not only would look at such things, but would have official photographs taken of themselves watching. These are the people who are put in power over the remaining Christians of the Near East!"

This terrible state of affairs is due, declares Mr. Harlow, "to international jealousy and intrigue. Economic expediency and moral deficiency—that is the trouble in the Near East." America, he says, has put "several million dollars and several thousand lives" into the Near East, but mostly for schools and colleges; but had she put a like sum of money and a like number of human lives there for purely commercial and economic interests he believes that "our attitude as a nation would be far different toward that wretched country." Yet, he goes on:

"Even to-day, late as it is, and with thousands lying dead of torture, starvation and murder at the hands of the Turks, I am absolutely sure that could popular opinion in the United States be aroused, as it would if it knew the real facts, our Government would be forced to take some action—action which would be welcomed by Great Britain, which would assure the people of the Near East security and safety at least from the burning of their homes, the outraging of their women and girls, the ruthless stealing of their children and the continuance of terror in their lives. But the morning paper says in headlines, 'American destroyers on way to Smyrna. Public assured they are for protection of Americans only.'

"Where is the humanity for which the men died whose crosses are still fresh over the graves in France?"

As always, Turkish forces are conducting a campaign of unparalleled atrocity, says *The Christian Science Monitor*, declaring that "what was done in time of peace in Armenia is being done with even more savagery in Anatolia. Before the Turkish lines the Christian population is flying, like herds of frightened sheep, and the fate of those who lag behind is death." This situation, believes the *Monitor*, presents a "sorry commentary upon the disappearance from the consciousness of mankind of the purpose