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THE HOLMES SLAUGHTER HOUSE.

The Castle of the Notorious Murderer at Chicago.

A veritable murder factory has been discovered in the house built at Chicago by H. H. Holmes, who is charged with at least eleven murders and suspected of many more. In this house, built and occupied by Holmes, the police have found secret rooms without light or air, a sealed chamber, a hidden trap door leading to a hanging secret-room, and a steel-bound room built into the wall.

The second floor is a labyrinth of mazes, doors and passages. It contains a death shaft where bodies could be lowered into the cellar and from which a hidden passage led to the sealed chamber. One witness has already identified the room where Holmes showed him three corpses on this floor of the house. Another has described a narrow escape from death in one of the dark rooms. The cellar, where large quantities of human remains have been discovered, contains every provision for destroying bodies. Two large vaults of quicklime, one of them containing some human bones, have been found beneath the floor. A hidden tank was found which contained a deadly oil and when this was unearthed an explosion followed which nearly cost three of the workmen their lives. Even more horrible than this was the discovery of a crematory in the cellar where human bodies could be incinerated. A woman's footprint discovered in a bed of quicklime in the cellar is supposed to be that of Miss Williams, who was last seen in this house, and part of whose jewelry has been identified among the contents of a stove used by Holmes. Human bones of all kinds have been dug up out of the cellar of this Bluebeard's castle, and the police have found tufts of hair, blood-stained linen and pieces of clothing which had been hastily concealed.

These point not only to the commission of wholesale murder, but lead to the belief that many victims will yet be added to the long list of those whom Holmes is charged with killing. He has already taken rank as the first criminal of the century, but the most astonishing thing about his career is the murder factory he erected in Chicago. With all of this Holmes, whose real name is Mudgett, and who is imprisoned in Philadelphia, defies the police to convict him of murder, while admitting that he has been guilty of insurance swindling. Holmes' Castle, as it is called, is an immense structure, with hundreds of rooms where victims could be removed with more expedition and safety than in the mountain stronghold of any feudal baron, and of which none but Holmes has ever known the secret. It was built immediately preceding the opening of the World's Fair, and there are many reasons to believe that Holmes, just then entering his murderous career upon a wholesale scale, contemplated gathering in victims among the visitors to Chicago.

There are hundreds of people who went to Chicago to see the fair and were never heard of again. The list of the "missing" when the fair closed was a long one, and in the greater number foul play was suspected. Did these visitors to the fair, strangers in Chicago, find their way to Holmes' castle in answer to the delusive advertisements sent out by him, never to return again? Holmes' castle, it now seems, as its labyrinths are explored, was his principal place of operation, and there it was that he planned and schemed and where many beautiful women are believed to have met their end. With such a place at his disposal, containing hundreds of rooms, tortuous passages, secret chambers, trap-doors, dumbwaiters, with a rope for lowering down bodies into vats; a tank and a retort for disposing of them, it is hard to understand why he went elsewhere to commit murders.

Holmes himself had planned the building, having no architect, and he took good care that the workmen were changed frequently, so that no one should know what the interior of the structure was like. He had air-tight chambers and a room of steel, lined with asbestos, where the wretched shrieks of his victims would be deadened, and he had a multitude of secret stairways and passages through which he could effect his escape at any time.

The building which Holmes erected without paying out a cent for brick, stone, wood or workmanship is a three-story brick, with stone basement and foundation and wooden bay windows. The partitions are covered with sheet iron. The walls are 12 feet long and 5 feet wide

and from one end to the other it is a labyrinth of narrow passages, twisting at all angles. In construction the basement and first floor are peculiar enough, but when the second floor is reached the bewilderment is complete.

On this floor there are six halls. The most peculiar feature of the 35 rooms on this floor is the number and location of the doors. There are 51 of these doors. They are cut in the walls in every conceivable place.

Their location is such that no room, with the exception of the sealed chamber, is without an exit other than the door by which it might be entered. Some of the rooms have four doors one opening on each side, and each into a different room. By this means there are a dozen different ways of going from one end of the floor to the other.

The detectives say that it would be an absolute impossibility for a stranger in the building to catch a person familiar with the rooms, either in daylight or at night, for the doors are so numerous that any stranger would be confused in trying to pass the length of the building.

At the south end of the second floor is a space, which is neither hall nor room, through which a person can wander several different ways, on account of the irregular walls. In fact, there seems to be little else but walls in the area. On all sides except one its only exits are through narrow passages, in which two persons could not pass each other. A portion of this space apparently has been used for a kitchen, but the fire which Holmes is supposed to have started in the building two years ago has obliterated all traces of housekeeping.

Interest centres, however, around the mysterious small rooms in the middle of the floor. From two rooms which have access to the remainder of the floor you step into a dark closet. There are five doors leading into the closet, making it in reality only a framework for doors.

One of these doors opens into a good-sized closet. Another door opens into the sealed chamber. This door was boarded up when search through the building first began, and it took an experienced eye to detect the presence of a doorway. When Detectives Norton and Fitzpatrick, who had charge of the search for the supposed bodies of Minnie and Annie Williams, tore down the lathing and plaster, they found themselves in a dark chamber, with no entrance save the one through which they had gone in.

This secret concealed chamber was one of the largest rooms in the house. It is about 12 feet long and 8 feet wide. It could not have been intended for a closet.

There was no furniture in it. The air was stifling when the detectives entered, and there was no visible means of ventilation at that time. Later, however, in a triangular end of the chamber, resembling a closet, there was found near the ceiling, an opening which apparently ended in darkness.

Investigation showed that a shaft ran up a few feet and then, turning at a right angle, opened into the dummy elevator shaft. This shaft is large enough to admit the body of a man, and access to the sealed chamber could be gained easily by getting on top of the dummy elevator at the second floor and raising it a few feet.

The north door of the five opening into the closet leads to the bathroom. In this room is a trap door in the floor, four feet long and two wide. Below it is a narrow stairs which led down into darkness.

After crawling down these stairs about eight feet you stand in another secret chamber. This is situated about half way between the first and the second floors.

This secret chamber is of about the size of the bathroom, seven feet by five feet, but there is little floor space, on account of the stairs from above and a cut through which a second set of stairs descends.

At the south end of this secret chamber there is a door which is securely fastened. It is known, however, to open on a stairway which leads down to the level of the first floor and communicates with a tin shop in Wallace street. The tinmer has built a bench against the door. He says he knows there is a stairway leading up, but he cannot tell where it ends.

The second set of stairs descends only about six feet and ends abruptly in a blind partition of lathing and plaster. The partition is only twelve inches higher than the foot of the stairs, and you can step from the stairs along the plastering for about five feet to an opening into the dummy elevator-shaft.

There is no escape from the second set of stairs except through this shaft, which drops to the cellar. Where the stairs end the east partition is very thin, and through it light sifts in from the prescription room of Holmes' drug store, which is on the first floor and in the northeast corner of the building.

The drug store has stairs leading down into the cellar, and you can stand on these stairs and look up through the imperfectly built and burned plaster wall to the second stairway. The partition itself seems to be of no use except as a blind for the stairway. The dummy elevator-shaft is about four feet square, and formerly extended from below the third floor to the cellar. Lately it has been boarded up.

When Holmes erected his building he said he was going to keep World's Fair "roomers" on the second floor. But most of his guests remained with him only

a short time. He had his office on the third floor, in the northeast corner, and in passing from his drug store to his office he always passed through one or more of the rooms.

It was on this second floor that Holmes is supposed to have carried on most of his fine work. The janitor and his wife seldom visited this space, and most of the time Holmes had it all to himself. He had electrical devices which warned him as he sat in his drug store when anybody walked over the floors of either the second or third story.

Minnie Williams, whom he is supposed to have murdered, occupied a room just off his office. It is said that she was of a most jealous disposition, and would get into a fury of passion, whenever he was found in the company of other women. To protect himself from her espionage he connected wires with a certain step on the stairway leading from the third to the second floor, so that he was apprised immediately as soon as she either went down or up these stairs.

The steel-jacketed room was found on the third floor of the castle and next to the office used by Holmes. It is practically a bank vault.

In addition to a steel lining, its sides are covered with asbestos to deaden sound. Its heavy steel doors swing on a big pair of hinges.

Nobody but Holmes could open this safe, which was large enough for people to stand up and walk about inside. The lock on the door is an expensive one, and the whole structure was put into the building at a very heavy expense.

With the door once closed tight, anybody inside would suffocate. A gaspipe however, had also been introduced by Holmes, ostensibly to give light, but in the opinion of the Chicago police, to hasten the death of his victims. By blowing in any of the pipes on the outside he could extinguish the light in the locked steel room and the unhappy victim would soon be asphyxiated.

There was nothing in this steel room at the time of the discovery, except some old papers, which were taken by the police. It is believed to be the only part of the murder apparatus on the third floor of the house.

On Friday of last week the pick of a workman uncovered a strange device in the castle. In the room on the second floor where Holmes used to sleep, a gas pipe runs over the floor. Where the pipe meets the wall it turns down into the floor and beneath the boards is a cut-off.

The pipe runs directly to the windowless room, where it is believed Mrs. Conner was murdered. The cut-off is believed to be one of Holmes' instruments of death. Sitting in his room, he could turn on with ease a flow of gas that would fill the dark sleeping apartment and asphyxiate the occupants.

The cellar of the castle is, however, more interesting at present than the upper floors, because it is there the police have discovered remains of human bodies, and the elaborate apparatus constructed by Holmes for making away with them.

It may be said right here that Holmes has all through the ramifications of his criminal career shown such shrewdness and foresight that even at the present moment there are serious doubts whether any one case of murder can be fastened upon him in a court of law. He covered up his tracks with devilish ingenuity.

With all the forethought and caution of an educated man, familiar with detective methods and legal proceedings, he seems to have provided beforehand for every contingency that might arise. Thus in the case of the human bones dug up in the cellar of the Castle, a game of astonishing shrewdness was unearched.

When the officers searching in the cellar for evidences of crime had collected a goodly number of bones, it was thought at last that Holmes' fate was sealed. Holmes, however, in his prison, at Philadelphia, at once said that while the police officers were trying to fasten upon him every imaginable crime, an examination of this evidence would show that instead of being the bones of human beings, they would be found to be soup bones, which he had thrown on a refuse heap in the cellar.

Sure enough, an examination of these bones disclosed the fact that some of them were soup bones, which could in no possible way be connected with a murder. At the same time some of the other were discovered to be human bones, and the police at once saw that the soup bones had been purposely so placed by Holmes to confuse possible searchers and break the force of any evidence they might bring against him.

It was on July 20, when the police were hot in the investigations of the mystery of the cellar of the Castle, that the explosion occurred there which nearly cost some of the workmen their lives. Fire Marshal James Kenyon with two assistants were running a tunnel from the cellar towards the street when they encountered a wall that gave forth a hollow sound.

As soon as this wall was broken through a horrible smell was encountered and flames like those of a charcoal house rushed forth. A plumber was sent for and the workmen gathered about while he proceeded to investigate.

The first thing the plumber did was to light a match. Then there was a terrific explosion. (Continued on Page 5.)

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