

No. 1

Nos. 7 & 9 will be added soon.



**T**HE IDEA was to select the contents of this first issue of the *Rex Stout Mystery Quarterly* much as one would choose the items of a good dinner—a pleasing variety of flavors and characteristics, a series of enjoyable satisfactions with no two alike but with no such rude shock for the palate as would be provided by swallowing a morsel of quail and then a forkful of turnip greens.

If the strictly American term "mystery" is taken to mean invariably a detective story, a priority for some rubber is needed in this case to make it stretch, for it is intended to include tales of horror and straight crime, and it is even likely that a ghost or a nameless thing will now and then get in. Better men than I have tried to keep them out and failed.

Some of the stories will be old friends to some readers, but only those which are so good that meeting them again will be a renewed

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delight. Some will have been dug out of volumes long out of print, and therefore welcome strangers to most. Some will be newborn, fresh from the typewriter, and of those there can never be too many of a quality deserving the services of the linotyper, the pressman and the binder. There is one in this first issue, by Bruno Fisher.

SAYERS, HAMMETT, CHRISTIE, JACOBS, HEARD. They are all to be found in this first issue. Those of course are only names, and a name is not a story, but it is sometimes a guarantee of one, and those five names make it as close to a certainty as the hopeful reader of a list of contents can ever hope to get.

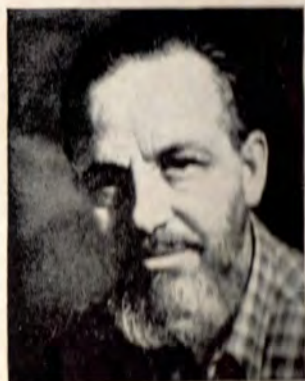
One other name, STEINBECK, may seem, to the purchaser of a mystery magazine, to belong to a chap who got into the wrong room by a regrettable error, but having stretched the title to include horror it seemed desirable to make it the very *best* horror.

H. FELIX VALCOB is a newcomer, and this is his first appearance in a reprint anthology. Perhaps you had better skip the story by him in this collection if you are a lawyer, or married to a lawyer, or in love with a lawyer. Otherwise don't miss it.

REX STOUT







## *In Spite of the Galaxy of Names*

IN THE CONTENTS LIST of this second number, it is not true that we are trying to proceed by thumbing lifts on the tails of comets or by hooking onto the projections of dazzling stars. The names are there not for the sake of the names, but because they are found over and over again in the by-lines of the best stories.

■ In the pertinacious and sometimes frenzied search for the most exciting and satisfying tales to offer you in this two-bit treat, we often find Allinghams and Dicksons and Hammets in the collection when the copy finally goes to the printer, not because they impress us or we hope they will impress you, but because they deliver the goods.

■ If you wouldn't be caught dead reading anything but fiction, you can skip the piece by Raymond Chandler. Otherwise you'll enjoy it, whether at the end you feel like cheering him on or cussing him out.

■ Unless you are absolutely sure you can't bear any tale of the supernatural ever written, don't miss this one by H. R. Wakefield, HE COMETH AND HE PASSETH BY. Wakefield is little known here, but in England he has a large audience.

■ There is no detective within a mile of James M. Cain's TRIAL BY JURY, but there is sudden death, and one of the less lovely answers to the question, when is a murder not a murder?

■ And one new-hatched chick by Robert D. Abrahams, a Philadelphia lawyer, who probably calls detectives by their first names.

■ Which makes this second number, if not the book you would chose to take to a desert island, at least a bunch of exceptionally fine stories—and anyway, you're not on a desert island.

REX STOUT

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*Have you got \$9,000  
lying around loose  
that you won't miss?*

Ha? All right, make it a quarter. Thanks.

Mass production is really something. You pay a dime for a can opener. But if other people weren't using them and you had one made just for you, what would you have to pay? Ten bucks would be cheap. It's the same with these stories. If other people weren't reading them, permitting enormous print orders, and you had them written just for you, this little item you have in your hands would set you back, in round figures, something like \$9,000. Probably, counting all editions that have been printed, and all subsidiary markets, such as radio and movies, the writers of these nine tales have got more than that for them.

Anyway, thanks for the quarter.

If you have a wife or girl friend who simply must have all the jewelry she can get, don't let her read *THE BUTLER*, by Bennet Copplestone. It might give her ideas. If you are yourself the wife or girl friend, it's probably too late to stop you now.

Do you already know Susan Dare? Then turn to *THE CALICO DOG*, by Mignon Eberhart, knowing what to expect. Otherwise, turn to it anyhow and find out, but watch your step when Jim Byrne is around.

In most mysteries told as shorts, the cards are stacked against you as a guesser. But in *THE VANISHING LADY*, by Alexander Woolcott, you have got it all. The next to last paragraph begins, "By the time the story reached me. . . ." When you get there, stop, dig, and come up with the answer. You really can, and, if you have a good opinion of the arrangements inside your head, you ought to.

In *BOSTON BLACKIE'S MARY*, by Jack Boyle, there is no hidden answer to dig for. There is only a story and a moral, the moral being that when you start that career of crime you are getting ready for, don't forget to have a Mary waiting for you outside the night you make your getaway from the coop—provided she's the kind of Mary Boston Blackie had. There aren't enough of her to go around.

In Philo Vance's famous set of rules—what not to do—for

writing mystery stories, there was a rule against having a crime committed in a locked room, because, Vance said, it had been done too often. I have often wondered whether John Dickson Carr wrote the story in this issue, *THE LOCKED ROOM*, deliberately to prove that Vance was talking through his hat. In any event he proved it.

When an editor reads a story that is under consideration for a collection like this, he does so, whether he has previously read the story or not, with a question constantly in the front of his mind, "Is it good enough to go in?" On Dashiell Hammett I give up. I had read *THEY CAN ONLY HANG YOU ONCE* when it first came out, and again a couple of years ago. But, starting to reread it with that question in my mind, I hadn't got further than two pages when the question was entirely forgotten; I was merely and exclusively enjoying myself. If you don't have the same experience, take this back where you got it and demand your \$9000.

*THE MAN UPSTAIRS*, by William Irish, has the same moral, in reverse English, as *BOSTON BLACKIE'S MARY*. Jerry neglected to provide himself with a Mary waiting outside; all he had was a stepsister; and the difference it made!

About H. P. Lovecraft, the author of *THE RATS IN THE WALLS*, there has been some difference of opinion. One of his admirers, Professor T. O. Mabbott of Hunter College, says that, "Lovecraft is one of the few authors of whom I can honestly say that I have enjoyed every word of his stories." Edmund Wilson, the critic who walks like a man, had a long piece on Lovecraft in the November 24, 1945, issue of the *New Yorker*, in which he practically called Professor Mabbott a halfwit, and ended up, "The Lovecraft cult is on an even more infantile level than the cult of Sherlock Holmes." Mr. Wilson ate green apples when a child, and he can't go for a walk in the country now, to get more green apples, because his brow gets caught in the telephone wires. Turn to page 70 and enjoy your second childhood.

*A MATTER OF TASTE*, by Dorothy L. Sayers, is exactly that. It has been said that no reader can thoroughly appreciate its delights unless he is himself capable of rolling a few drops on his tongue of, first, Montrachet-Ainé 1911, and second, Chevalier-Montrachet 1911, and telling which is which. I can only speak for myself. I would certainly not be able to name either the chateau or the year, and possibly not even the region, but I am in no doubt whatever about the story. It is vintage Sayers.

*Rex Stout*



## INTRODUCTION

It is not to be feared, but hoped, that you have read some of these stories before, and it would be no cause for dismay if you have read all of them (though that is unlikely).

Good stories are like good friends, they improve with intimacy, and, like friends again, the better they are the more intimacy they can take. Some of the Sherlock Holmes tales, or a MALTESE FALCON or a STRONG POISON, will stand a dozen readings in as many years. They are of course exceptional; the supply is all too scanty of stories which will pass so severe a test; but go down a step, down from the very best to the very good, and while you will find that there never are enough for the greedy-gut the supply will be well above the level of subsistence.

These very good stories, while they would not survive the test of a reading a year for a dozen years, are just as good or even better at a second reading or even a third, provided a sufficient interval has passed. You may or may not remember the application of the interesting theory of Dr. Harrison Trevor in THE PERFECT CRIME. Your memory may be a jump ahead, or a jump behind, of the trials and travels of Tony Marvell in NEW MURDERS FOR OLD. The strange and satisfying twist

that ends THE ELEVENTH JUROR may creep into your consciousness with the opening paragraph, or anywhere along the way. The outcome of the battle of the brothers in THE DUBLIN MYSTERY may be no puzzle at all, or you may reach the final page before you mutter with gratification, "Sure, I remember!" You may be prepared to solve the problem of THE PUZZLE LOCK with the flair and ingenuity of Thorndyke himself, or you may be doomed to die of suffocation unless Thorndyke comes to the rescue. In THE QUESTION MARK you may be neck and neck with Campion all the way to the springing of the trap, or you may be tagging along behind with Herbert Boot and in danger of getting yourself jailed for criminal libel. And you may know who the goat is, in THE SNATCHING OF BOOKIE BOB, the minute you see his name, or you may chuckle with pleased surprise when you find, too late, that you too have been swindled.

The point is that stories as good as these are not hurt, but helped, by a flavor of reminiscence if it is neither too fresh nor too strong. If you have never read them before you will enjoy them all. If you have read them, or some of them, say three to ten years ago, you will enjoy them none the less, for they can stand that degree of intimacy without any trouble.

REX STOUT



# INTRODUCTION BY

*Rex Stout*

People who don't like detective stories, like men who don't like women or women who don't like men, will go to almost any length to rationalize that aversion. Reading over the stories herewith presented before finally passing them along to the printer, I was reminded of a piece I read in some magazine years ago, expressing deep concern over the possibility that readers of such stories would get ideas in their heads. With popular fiction explaining in detail dozens of ingenious schemes for murder, many of them requiring very little outlay for tools or other equipment, who can feel safe, even alone in a locked room with all the curtains drawn?

As I remember it, it struck me at the time that the argument was rather far-fetched, and any attempt to apply it to the stories you are about to read would certainly be preposterous. Even if homicide is on your agenda for the near future, which is highly unlikely, I would not recommend this issue of RSMM for research, in spite of its top rating for entertainment.

The technique described by Carter Dickson in *Blind Man's Hood* could not even be considered. It is true that you can still buy candles and kerosene lamps, but the purchase would be traced easily by any detective worth his salt, even a second-rater, let alone a Vance or a Wimsey.

As for the method used in *The Man with Copper Fingers*, by Dorothy L. Sayers, the cost of the paraphernalia would run around \$10,000, and you would have to take a special course in a laboratory or read seven or eight books to learn how to do it. If you are as hell-bent for homicide as all that, nothing will stop you anyhow.

The plan adopted in *Post-Mortem*, by Cornell Woolrich, could be used only by an extremely vulgar person, totally lacking in respect for other people's privacy, and therefore is obviously unacceptable to any reader of RSMM. The same objection, in principle, holds for *Help Wanted, Male*, by Rex Stout. You'll know what I mean if and when you read the story.

Regarding *The Crayfish*, by H. F. Heard, I have only to ask, are you both a genius and the luckiest man on earth? If you are not, don't even dream of trying it; if you are, you can use anything you like from a blunt instrument to a poisoned dart.

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When Leslie Charteris agreed to do a brand new SAINT story for us we gave three cheers and went out and bought ourselves a drink. But we kept our fingers crossed, because we know that a writer agreeing to do a story is one thing, and his actually proceeding to write it is quite another. In this case our fears were groundless. Mr. Charteris not only wrote it; he got the script to us by the date he had promised it. We promptly devoured it; and here it is.

Any new story featuring a widely known fictional character always raises the point: is it up to snuff or not? Does it break par or is it a floof? Doubtless 3000 years ago Homer had to undergo that acid test many times. When, in our own century, A. Conan Doyle finally yielded to pressure and THE RETURN OF SHERLOCK HOLMES appeared, the fur flew all over two continents. Should Dorothy L. Sayers relent and turn out another Lord Peter Wimsey, the comparisons with STRONG POISON or THE NINE TAILORS would be merciless, endless and minute.

But in a way such comparisons are beside the point. The establishment in public favor of a Wimsey or a Poirot depend to some extent, it is true, on the quality as to plot and narrative of the stories in which they appear. But Homer, even nodding, is still Homer; and Poirot, even on a dull case and doing a routine and uninspired job, is still Poirot. It is actually a pleasure to be with him

when he is a little off tone and by no means brilliant; it shows that he is human. It is exciting to see Joe DiMaggio belt one into the stands, but it is also fun to see him pop-foul to the first baseman.

All this may sound ominous. It may seem that I am leading up to saying: this new SAINT story is a turkey. Not at all. It will inevitably invite comparisons, but I see no point in my trying to classify it as Grade A SAINT, or any other grade. You can do your own grading, which is part of the fun.

The other stories in this issue have all seen print before. None of them, I note with some concern, is a straight murder-detective tale after the classical pattern, but neither is any of them actually out of bounds. The attempt to pull off the perfect crime is here (THE CALLING CARDS OF MR. ENGLE); and the tough guy shoving his way through (HANGIN' CRAZY BENNY); and the clue that stares you in the face without your seeing it (THE ARTICLE IN QUESTION); and the hidden object try to guess where (ONE CHANCE IN A MILLION); and the disappearing corpse (ERROR AT DAYBREAK); and the adventure on the lonely mountain at night—with, heaven help us, five good Germans—(THE ARMY OF THE SHADOWS); and the motive strictly sui generis (THE BOTTLE MINE); and the horror unutterable which yet must get uttered and does (SKEL-ETON).

All in all, as a collection (I think), rather above the average than below. —REX STOUT



## *Introduction*

What'll it be?

A meticulous blow-by-blow report of how, down-under in New Zealand, the combined efforts of neighbors, technicians and detectives, all working together, put the finger on an ambitious contriver of murders, just as it really happened some fourteen years ago? For you: *A NEW ZEALAND TRAGEDY*, by Freeman Wills Crofts.

Or a short sharp episode under the brief sharp beam of a spotlight, with an O. Henry snap at the tail? For you: *THE WATCHER*, by Thomas Burke.

Or an introduction to a murderer and a ringside seat at the performance—and then a switch to the cop and a place at his elbow while he catches up? For you: *THE BODY OF A WELL-DRESSED WOMAN*, by Cornell Woolrich.

Or something really new and different? Something which couldn't possibly be listed under any of the recognized headings in any catalogue? For you: *THE FURNACE MAN*, by Luke Faust.

Or Sally? That's her name for your two bits this time. She is the girl you would be glad to be with practically anywhere, from a soda fountain stool to a stance at the altar,

but instead of teaming up with you at any of those spots she persists, the long night through, in tracking down a killer and pinning the tag on him. For you: *MURDER AT THE OPERA*, by Vincent Starrett.

Or an outrageous, preposterous, high-hearted and cold-blooded gag? For you: *ANOTHER AMERICAN TRAGEDY*, by John Collier.

Or the triumph of science, the strictly modern culprit-remover, the laboratory magic which, instead of asking us for faith, shows us the proof? For you: *THE CHARGE IS MURDER*, by Carlyn Coffin.

And then, for all of you: *THREE CUPS OF TEA*, by Christopher La Farge. This is its first appearance in print, but certainly not its last. In a way it is just another episode, but also it is the story of a man's life, all of it, in the span of a few pages. It is a lovely job, not merely because it creates a man, but because it makes him known to us and felt by us in the way that is both hardest and easiest—hardest for the writer and easiest for us. It is done not by description, exposition and analysis, but by letting us hear him think and watch him act; the most dangerous and acutely necessary act he has ever performed. That is what makes it the story of his life. You might almost say that this murder was what Philip was born for.

—REX STOUT