



THE INTERNATIONAL

EDITOR
GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK
ASSOCIATE EDITOR
JOSEPH BERNARD RETHY
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
ALEISTER CROWLEY

VOL. XI. NO. 9.

SEPTEMBER, 1917

PRICE 15 CENTS.

THE SCRUTINIES OF SIMON IFF

By EDWARD KELLY

NO. 1. BIG GAME.

I.

Dick Ffoulkes was in good practice at the Criminal Bar, and his envied dinner parties, given to few and well-known friends, were nearly always held in his chambers in Lincoln's Inn. They looked out on one of the pleasantest green spots in London.

There was a brooding of fog on the first December night of 1911, when Ffoulkes gave a supper to celebrate his victory over the Crown in the matter of the Marsden murder.

Marsden was a wealthy man, and had no enemies. The police suspected a mere protégé of his unmarried sister, who was his only heir; he might thus benefit indirectly; no other motive could be found. The boy—for he was barely twenty—had dined with Marsden on the night of the murder, and of course the police had finger-prints by the dozen. Ffoulkes had torn their flimsy web to rags, and tossed them in the air with a laugh.

All his guests had gone but one, his oldest friend, Jack Flynn. They dated from Rugby, and had continued their inseparability at Balliol. They had read together for the bar, but Flynn, after being called, had branched off into the higher journalism.

The Marsden case had stirred England profoundly. Slight as was the motive attributed to Ezra Robinson, the suspected boy, there was no other person with any motive at all; faint as were the clues which pointed to him, there were none at all to point elsewhere.

Besides these considerations, there was apparently no physical possibility of any other murderer. Marsden had unquestionably died of a thrust in the heart from a common carving-knife, which was identified as the one which had been sent up with the dinner. Unobserved access to the suite was impossible, a floor clerk being continuously seated in full view of the only door to the whole apartment. The only person known to have been in the room, after the table had been cleared by the hotel servants, was the accused. And even Ffoulkes had not

dared to suggest that the wound—a straight drive from above and behind—might have been self-inflicted. Nor was there any motive of robbery, or any trace of search for papers. But there was an undoubted thumb-print of Robinson's in blood on the handle of the carving knife, and there was a cut on his left hand. He had explained this, and the presence of the knife itself, by saying that it had slipped as he was carving, and that he had run into the bathroom to wash and bind the cut, leaving the knife on the washstand.

The only point clean for the defense was the medical evidence, which put the time of death some two hours later than the departure of Robinson. This coincided with a temporary failure of the electric current all through the hotel. Ffoulkes suggested that the old man, who had drunk a good deal of wine, had gone to take a bath before retiring, seen the knife, remembered his old skill as an amateur juggler, ample testimony of which was forthcoming, and started to play at catching the knife. The light had gone out while he was throwing; he had dodged maladroitly, and the blade had chanced to catch him between the shoulders.

The opposite theory was that Robinson had returned to fetch his cigarette-case, which was in fact found in the room by the police, passed the floor clerk and slipped into the suite in the short spell of darkness, seen his opportunity and seized it, making off before the light was restored. He had not been able to give a satisfactory account of his movements. His story was that he had left Marsden early on account of a severe headache, and had wandered about the streets trying to obtain relief; on the other hand, no one in the hotel would swear to having seen him after his ostensible departure. The floor clerk had testified to a considerable commotion just at the time of the failure of the electric supply; she had heard noises apparently in several rooms; but this might well have been the normal confusion caused by the sudden darkness.