

THE STRANGLER OF SOHO

"Even today mere mention of the strangler is enough to send a shudder through Soho."

Four Women Are the Victims in London's Great Murder Mystery

town. In brief, Soho is the hoodlum of London metropolitan districts.

Modern Soho is roughly bounded by Oxford street, Charing Cross road, Leicester square, and Warwick street, but its

and taciturn, he is the policeman's policeman, representing the plodding type that prefers established rule-of-thumb methods to the fluffy folderol of scientific crime detection.

Five years before Yandell had solved the sensational torch murder of Walter Spatchett by arresting Samuel Furnace. The latter committed suicide before trial, but not before confessing the murder.

Yandell saw that the newest strangler crime offered a tough problem. In the first place, few people knew the henna-haired victim; none intimately. They thought she was a Frenchwoman, but her finger prints identified her as Elsie MacMahon, also known as French Marie, Paulette Artrez, Paulette Estelle, Paulette Suzette Lazus, and Lottie Asterly, who some years before had been arrested for a minor crime.

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Paulette, as police called her from this preponderance of aliases, was born in Croydon, England, and taken at an early age to Boulogne, France. There she learned the French language. With this she accented her native English.

As a young woman Paulette found that she could profitably exploit this Gallic touch, as she also exploited a head of bushy red hair. The accent, red hair, and a pretty face and shapely

figure enabled Paulette to venture into exciting fields. She became an artist's model first, and no doubt there are in various obscure galleries canvases portraying the lovely Titian-haired girl that was Paulette.

In time she veered into other pursuits. Good times and dissipation eventually worked their usual penalty. Before she reached her thirties she had lost her looks and charm. Soon she was living in Soho.

She worked whenever she could find work, and she spent many of her pennies for candy for the neighborhood children. At other times she drifted into the pubs, where she met pick-

pockets, sneak thieves, and others. Drink was one way to forget the past, and especially her lover, Armand, who had been deported.

One day last August Paulette was drinking in the Adam and Eve pub. A slick-haired, saw-toothed young man with a mousey mustache sidled up and smiled. In a moment Paulette had found a new friend. The two left the pub together, laughing and talking, and carrying bottles of liquor under their arms. Neighbors saw them enter Paulette's flat together. None saw him leave. Paulette never left alive.

Scotland Yard began an intense search for the slick-haired stranger, certain he was the strangler, but neither could they find him nor learn much about him. Soho doesn't talk to the police about crimes within its borders, and not at all about murders that may have underground motives. Scotland Yard

can do little about it. In free England police cannot purge alien districts as German police do in Berlin. Nowhere else, probably, do police face such stubborn silence on crime.

The silence was not only stubborn but oppressive in the strangling of Paulette. It was the same brand of silence that has beaten Scotland Yard's best brains again and again. It resembled the kind imposed by Soho's vice ring, directed by a mysterious leader in Compton street.

Soho doesn't like men and women who talk. It calls them coppers' narks, or stool pigeons. Now and then, of course, some daring man or woman will risk talking to police. And now and then some man or woman is found mysteriously slain. Soho has its own direct way of dealing with squealers.

Police admit the Strangler of Soho who killed Paulette may have been an agent of the Soho vice ring, assigned by the ring's overlord to enforce the code of silence.

For Paulette, the ex-artist's model, had been a coppers' nark.

Vice District's Silence His Shield

By DAVID DARRAH

London, England.

MEET Mrs. Annie Connell, sitting in her small Bath Row flat off Euston road in the shadows of the somber Soho district of London, glanced at the dresser clock and uttered a startled cry: "My, my, I'll be late for work!" She gulped down the last of her cup of tea. Almost 6 p. m., and she'd have to hurry.

She slid a serviceable sleeve across her lips, yanked an old blue hat over her older gray head, and hurried from her room, down the stairs, and into the street. Once outside, she stopped abruptly, then sniffed suspiciously. "Smoke," she said. Mrs. Connell looked up. Immediately she began screaming, "Fire, fire!" A thin streamer of smoke was floating from a small third-floor window next door, above a radio store.

Although Mrs. Connell was justifiably excited over her alarming discovery, she was distinctly conscious at the time—and she remembered it more distinctly later on—of radio music. It was loud. It struck her as being quite strange, for she could tell that the music was playing in the very room that was sending out the smoke.

Firemen don't race to fires in London as they do in Chicago or other American cities, but they reached the Bath Row building in time to prevent a possibly bad blaze. Once they arrived, however, they discovered that the fire was relatively unimportant.

For they found, lying quietly on a cot in the smoldering room, a henna-haired woman dressed rather gaudily in green. Her face was deathly pale except for dabs of rouge on her lips and cheeks.

The woman was dead—the firemen saw that at a glance. And the radio, a few feet away, was blaring. A woman dead, a radio screaming, and a room in smoke—these meant a job for Scotland Yard. Soon a mobile laboratory arrived, manned by finger print examiners, photographers, and chemists.

These experts didn't require much time to establish the fact that the dread Strangler of Soho was at work again.

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That was last August, but even today mere mention of the Strangler of Soho is enough to send a shuddery feeling through the district. The name Soho itself has a sinister ring. It is an intriguing name, probably originating several centuries ago

Italians in large numbers, then Germans and Jews, and latterly Greeks.

In its full bloom Soho attracted brilliant men along with refugees and charlatans. Edmund Burke, the great parliamentarian, lived in Gerrard street; so did John Dryden, poet and critic. Mozart as a boy lived in Frith street. Even royalty of a sort called Soho home. It was in Soho where King Theodore of Corsica—the former Stephen

shadows radiate generously in all directions, so that street boundaries are theoretical rather than physical confines.

Life teems here. It may be drab beneath, but it is gaudily gay on the surface. Cheap cafés stud the area. Everywhere are seamy coffee shops where, it is said, tiny packets of opium and hyoscine change hands at exorbitant prices. One may tumble into a drinking cellar anywhere. The 11 p. m. closing hours are elastically interpreted for them.

Greek street, once called Grig, is always alive with activity. So are Compton street and Frith street, once called Thrift. On historic Little Newport street some years ago Roger Vernon, escapee from Devil's Island, shot Max (Red) Kassel, vice boss. Kassel recovered and lived until February, 1936, when he was slain in a shooting described by a horrified London press as "England's first one-way gangland ride."

Into this curious welter of peoples, streets, buildings, and night clubs, with its vice, gambling, counterfeiting, dope, and all their concomitant evils, come the fallen from everywhere, and sometimes the more respectable from fast-living West End, where cultured Mayfair and Kensington find their fun.

It is a long road from the more refined West End to Soho, but the usual one for such as the henna-haired woman in green who was found on her cot in a burning room last August.

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The woman was dead, as the Scotland Yard mobile laboratory squad had discovered. She had been strangled.

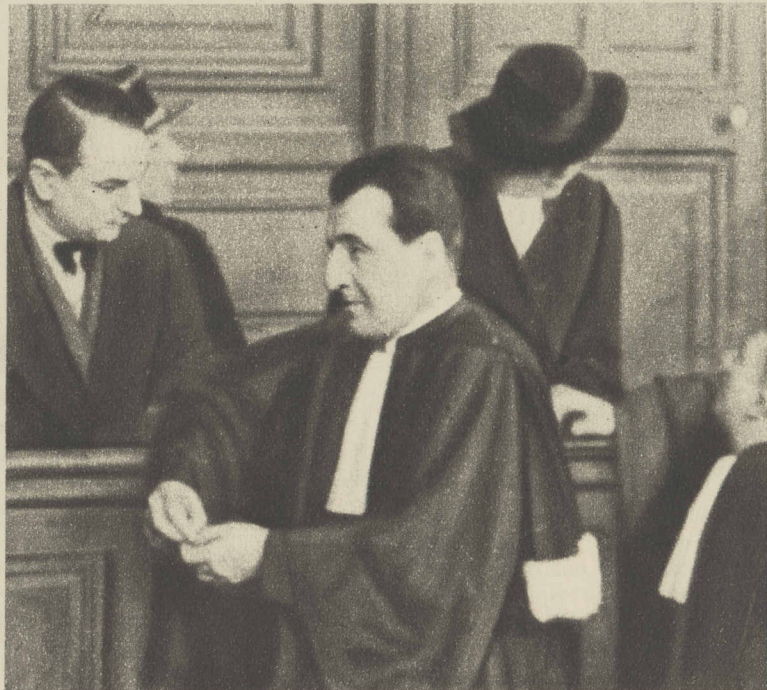
The Strangler of Soho was promptly blamed.

The news of the crime speedily found its way into metropolitan papers, perturbing London generally and Scotland Yard particularly—and with reason.

For here was the fourth woman to die at the hands of a sinister strangler in or near the Soho district in less than two years. Worse yet, not one of the three other strangler murders had been solved.

The previous victims were a woman known as "French Fif," strangled with a silk stocking in Archer street in November, 1935; Mrs. Janet Cousins, choked with a scarf in Lexington street in April, 1936, and Mrs. Constance Hind, put to death with piano wire in Old Compton street in May, 1936.

There appeared to be an ominous similarity to all these crimes—quick, mysterious, and apparently motiveless. Scotland Yard needed no prodding to get to work on the crime. District Superintendent George Yandell assumed charge. Bulldogish



Roger Vernon, self-confessed vice lord of London's Soho district, speaks from the dock to his counsel after receiving a ten-year sentence in the shooting of Max (Red) Kassel in Soho. His mistress, Suzanne Bertron, beside him, was acquitted. Vernon was tried in Paris because French law did not permit his extradition. (Acme photo.)

in the old fox hunters' calls for the hounds, "So-ho, so-ho!"

In those days the district was known as St. Giles Fields, and Shaftesbury avenue, now the area's main thoroughfare, was a country lane traversed by huntsmen. There is another explanation—that the name evolved from the rallying cry or watchword at the battle of Sedgemoor more than 250 years ago.

Originally the Soho district was a city apart, continental in aspect and spirit and largely settled by Frenchmen who had fled their native land after the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685. They were followed by

Theodore, Baron Neuhoof of Prussia—sought sanctuary after he was driven from his island kingdom in the middle eighteenth century. A tablet to his memory was erected in St. Anne's churchyard, where also was buried William Hazlitt, noted literary critic and essayist.

It was in Soho, too, that Sir Samuel Johnson, English writer and lexicographer, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, renowned painter, founded the Literary club, first known simply as "the Club," which was to attract many immortals of the pen, including Gibbon, historian of the Roman empire. In keeping with famous figures and names, Soho also boasted pretentious homes and other grand buildings.

Soho's golden grandeur no longer exists. Tablets mark this spot and that of former glory. Sometimes a chance glance through the open door of a drab tenement reveals fretted ceilings, frescoed walls, or Corinthian columns of a marble fireplace as reminders of the district's rich past. In such fallen palaces of the departed great today's tenants need not dream of dwelling in marble halls.

Time and violent influences have changed Soho. Originally a haven for the persecuted, it became a haven also for the wicked, for criminals, plotters, gamblers, vicemongers, until now it is a fester on old London



Superintendent George Yandell



The house in Bath Row, Euston road, where Paulette was found dead. The arrow indicates the window of her room.

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Leaves hair so manageable it sets beautifully right after washing . . . and abounds with dazzling highlights.

MILLIONS of women, whose hair has always been left dull, dry-looking, hard-to-manage after an ordinary shampoo, are getting the beauty thrill of their lives. For the new Special Drene Shampoo for Dry Hair magically leaves such hair soft, and amazingly easy to manage—right after washing. Leaves it sparkling with highlights, just as Regular Drene leaves normal and oily hair gleaming and glistening.

So whether your hair is dry, normal or oily, you can give it the most beautifying shampoo ever known. For there are now two Drene Shampoos, and all you need to do is this: If ordinary shampoos leave your hair dull, dry and unruly use Special Drene Shampoo for Dry Hair. Otherwise, use Regular Drene. A single shampoo will amaze and delight you with its beautifying results.

Drene works these wonders because it is different from any shampoo you have

ever used. A shampoo as safe as water on hair; and so different that the process by which it is made has been patented. It is not a soap, so it cannot possibly leave an unraisable, sticky film on hair to dull its natural lustre. Thus, special after-rinses are totally unnecessary. It is not an oil, so it cannot deposit a gummy film to catch dust and dirt. Yet, hair gleams and glistens as never before.

Drene actually makes 5 times more lather than soap in hardest water. Lather so gentle, so active and cleansing that it entirely rids hair and scalp of dirt, grime, perspiration—even embarrassing dandruff flakes. Yet you cannot

find a milder, safer, more beautifying shampoo. And remember, healthy hair demands a safe shampoo.

Drene leaves every hair shaft so free of dirt and film that permanents turn out softer, more lustrous, more beautiful, because the wave solution can take hold evenly. Even dull, dried or bleached hair becomes more brilliant, more natural looking.

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There Are Now Two Drene Shampoos
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(Photo from Tribune London Bureau.)
A business corner in Soho square, London.