

## FIENDS WHO WENT TO THE CHAIR

by GEORGE LAVORATO

**P**addy's historical pig had no greater claim to being Irish than did Captain Coughlin, who in the year 1915 was numbered among the truly great on the Brooklyn Police Force. Big and jovial, with the quick wit of his race as well as the explosive temper, he had come up the hard way, starting as a rookie on the street at the turn of the century when Irish fists still remained the surest way to maintain law and order in the big city.

It didn't take the rookie Coughlin long to make one important discovery about fists. They were fine when you could see somebody to hit, but weren't much use when you were looking for an unknown murderer and this elusive gentleman didn't give you a chance to smack him down. So Coughlin came to the conclusion that maybe Sherlock Holmes, Arsene Lupin, and the other famous detectives in fiction really had something to offer.

So he took up the study of criminology and by 1915 he was a Captain and behind him were thirty difficult murder cases all solved and salted away for posterity. Yet he didn't forget what he had learned as a rookie. He liked to boast that he had seen so many criminals that he could smell one a mile away.

And it was this peculiar accomplishment that accounts today for the fact that the murder of Julia Heinler isn't numbered among the famous unsolved crimes of New York City.

There was, of course, much more to the case than Captain Coughlin's keen scent. Mystery in a medley of shades, hate and deep passion, intrigue and the cold dank finger of international espionage—all these came marching out on the stage to cloud and hide the real motive. In fact, so dazzling was the array of these inimitable actors that it is doubtful that even a Sherlock Holmes, with all his cold scientific deduction, could have solved the case for the simple reason that he lacked one important element—Captain Coughlin's earthy touch in the field of crime.

On the morning of April 23, 1915, Captain Coughlin stood in the kitchen

◀ *Julia Heinler in period police photo, lying in blood on the small kitchen floor.*

of Julia Heinler's home at 217 Albe-marle Road in Flatbush. She lay on the floor, her lifeless body covered with a white tablecloth stained with blood. Her head had been bashed in and there were two cords stretched around her neck.

The body had been identified by patrolmen Jim McGovern and F. C. Blessman of the Parkville Station House a half an hour before. A frantic phone call from a woman to the station house had told the police that a body was lying on the kitchen floor of the Heinler home. The two patrolmen had to break the kitchen door down to get to the body and identify it as Julia Heinler.

Solving thirty murder cases had given Captain Coughlin certain pronounced likes and dislikes in this delicate art of human destruction. His pet hate was any individual who did away with a defenseless woman, especially if she were a respectable and kindly housewife. The Captain was happily married and a good family man himself, and perhaps when he faced a case where a mother was dead, it was something that could strike in his home.

His Irish temperament gave him various degrees of anger, but when he really got mad, he didn't bellow or flay with his fists. His face seemed to



*Joseph Hanel, one of the many odd boarders in the strange house in Flatbush.*

draw a little tighter and he had the habit of pursing his lips together until they seemed only two thin lines.

They were that way when he reached down and picked up the end of the tablecloth and looked at the face beneath it. He let the cloth drop as abruptly as he had picked it up.

"She hasn't been dead long," was his only comment.

Inspector Dillon, who had arrived at the house ahead of Captain Coughlin, answered: "I don't know how long she has been dead, but the killer was here some time. He or she has looted every room in the house and this isn't a small place."

Which was very true. The husband of the dead woman was Seligman L.

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**The gloomy house had a lot of strange people living within its walls of intrigue and danger. Their methods of killing each other were no less bizarre.**