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DO YOUR OWN SLEUTHING

DETECTIVE stories for years have been cut to their stereotyped pattern, but in 1936 Dennis Wheatley and J. G. Links broke new ground spectacularly with the publication of their ingenious murder mystery, "Murder Off Miami," soon followed by the equally successful "Who Killed Robert Prentice?" Now comes a third book, "The Malinsay Massacre," which skilfully upholds the remarkable reputation won by its predecessors.

These detective mysteries, as most readers know, are not "shockers" in the usual sense. They consist of a bundle of papers and photographs, neatly tied but detachable, which tell the story and give all the evidence of a crime. The reader is given this information and invited to solve the mystery—the author's solution at the end is sealed to combat the inevitable urge to sneak a look before one's own sleuthing is over.

In "The Malinsay Massacre," letters, newspaper clippings, photographs and maps tell the tragic story of the old titled family of the Raeburns, four of whom were murdered on their island home within a few weeks of each other. The case has certain very baffling features and, as the investigation proceeds, a host of clues point accusingly to half a dozen suspects. When the hand of the murderer strikes again—and again—the reader's zeal for unmasking reaches fever pitch.

Undoubtedly, "The Malinsay Massacre" provides a splendid wrestling match for the wits. To read it alone, however, is to miss more than half its excitement. What you need is a few friends around you and an alert brain inside you. Then you will find "The Malinsay Massacre" as fascinating a game and as neat a puzzle as you have come across in a long time.

Candidly, I would quarrel with Messrs. Wheatley and Links, despite the ingenuity and thoroughness of the case they have prepared, for certain weaknesses in motive and method for the murders. Nevertheless, the planning is on the whole much better done than in many "straight" thrillers, and only those will grumble who—like me—missed the solution.

Of "The Malinsay Massacre," it is fair to quote what a reviewer in the "New Statesman and Nation" wrote of the Robert Prentice mystery: "I must tell all readers with any glimmering of detective instinct that they will be mad if they do not buy it at once. If they wait to borrow or steal a copy, someone is bound to start discussing the plot with them and ruining their potential enjoyment."

"The Malinsay Massacre," by Dennis Wheatley and J. G. Links. (Hutchinson and Co., Ltd, London). Our copy from the publishers.

RECKLESS COWBOY JUMPS THE MOON

ON the dust cover of Johnston McCulley's latest novel, "Reckless Range" is a drawing of a cowboy on a white horse

jumping over the moon and a couple of mountains. This is a fair indication of the substance of this Wild West tale into which has been crammed enough incident for three stories and enough shooting for a half-score of G-men.

Apart from the overcrowding of action, however, the book follows Western traditions fairly successfully and manages to maintain interest, despite the obvious invulnerability of the rough-riding hero who goes in pursuit of outlaws to clear his own and his father's name. It is doubtful how much longer such woolly yarns will continue to sell profitably, for the writers generally ignore completely the art of characterisation. Still, in the meantime they are much more invigorating reading of the lighter sort than the majority of earnestly inept "psychological" novels which are fashionable just now.

"Reckless Range," by Johnston McCulley (Hutchinson, London). Our copy from the publishers.

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