

# Roberta Risks It

MARGARET CAMERON

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Had either Roberta or Piggy suspected the straits in which Nixon found himself their course would have been altered, with what outcome who can say? But having no faintest inkling of the dangers encompassing the Whangdoodle, Piggy said blithely:

"Get on your duds and let's go out."

"Out where?"

"Keene—to shop. This is the day when we must show ourselves."

"But—suppose Cliff does suspect? He did yesterday, and he might come over here now to make sure."

"We'll have to take a chance on that. Anyhow, I've got a scheme. I'm going to hunt up the sheriff now and see if my new license plates have come. When I get back we'll boldly sally forth and show we have nothing to fear."

Before setting out, however, he held a consultation with Janet, and together they invaded the attic, where sundry locked trunks belonging to the owner of the house were stored. Piggy's keys came into requisition and he left one of them with his lieutenant, who lingered aloft after he had descended. At Fitzwilliam depot, he obtained and affixed his New Hampshire license plates and heard from the sheriff further details and theories about the abduction, returning then to the house for Roberta.

No sooner had they rolled away than Janet routed Celia from her bed and stationed her at the window, like Sister Anne, to watch for a cloud of dust, herself stripping the bed and restoring the room to its former unused aspect. She finished none too quickly, for before she reached the foot of the stairs on her way to the kitchen, she heard Celia's frightened voice from the hall above.

"Janet! My father! He's coming with two other men. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Up w' ye tae the garret! Quick, noo!" said Janet, suiting action to word. With astonishing nimbleness for one of her years, she propelled the limping girl up the narrow stairway, and sixty seconds later—one of which she used to smooth her sleek white hair and pat her cuffs into place—she composedly opened the door in response to repeated impatient knocking.

Events had not tended to make either Scott or Nixon, who accompanied him, patient. The former's

temper, roiled at the Monday morning conference, where he received Brazenose's unqualified refusal to sell his plant and in retaliation gave formal notice of the cancellation of their contract, had not cleared when he was aroused from belated sleep to answer the telephone call from Nixon, who began to explain that during a fire, evidently of incendiary origin—

"Fire? What burned?" Scott interrupted.

"Nothing, except some wood piled behind the barn and soaked with gasoline. There's no damage. But—"

"Where were the dogs? Poisoned?"

"No, they were outside the fence," said Nixon, who knew whereof he spoke.

"They couldn't get outside, unless the wire was cut, and then they'd get in again."

"Well, they didn't. Celia's gone."

"What? What's that?"

"Celia—has—disappeared—during the fire—probably with Roberta."

"Has she been there?"

"Nobody's seen her, but Celia's gone."

Scott swore comprehensively before it occurred to him to inquire how Nixon happened to be on the spot. No explanation was forthcoming.

"I'll tell you about that later. You'd better come up."

"You bet I'll come up—straight!"

"I've notified officers along every route to New York and Boston—"

"You've what?"

"Notified officers to watch for Celia."

"You're a damn fool!" Scott liked publicity no better than did the elder Brazenose, and his faith in political appointees in general and rural peace officers in particular was slight. "Stay here until I come."

He slammed the receiver into the hook, jerking it down again immediately to call Cody. Again they drove all night, even more rapidly than on the earlier occasion, a week before. The only reason they were not arrested for speeding was that nobody could overtake them, motorcycles being fewer than now.

When Scott had heard the whole story, he raged. Everyone at Birchwood, with the single exception of the dogs was under suspicion. The gardener, whom the dogs obeyed, was accused of putting them off the property with

malice prepense and the patched wire he had discovered proved no alibi. Mrs. Scott, twice false to her trust, had succumbed to Roberta's wiles; the maids had been bribed; between them they had arranged the fire in a preposterous attempt to pull the wool over his eyes. And Nixon, caught in the act, captured and held by the trusty dogs, what had he to say for himself?

Nixon had a good deal to say. He had believed Roberta in the vicinity—

"You knew she was. I thought at the time that you came here Saturday morning as a blind."

"I did not. I didn't know then where Roberta was and I don't now. I did know that she was bent upon seeing Celia, and I intended to prevent it—for reasons that nobody understands better than you."

"You'll understand 'em better yourself before I'm through with you. Well?"

Then came the story of the night walk, the whistle on the hill, and Nixon's suspicion; his scramble through the brush, ended by the encounter with the dogs. The cat had not been discovered and was his own secret. Subsequent proceedings had interested him vitally, but as participation in them had been impossible, he could offer only hearsay evidence up to the moment when the gardener had called off the besiegers, after which he had done everything in his power to insure the capture of the fugitives.

"But there is this," he added hastily, as Scott grunted and took breath for another diatribe. "Yesterday I rode around through several of these little towns on the chance of seeing Roberta somewhere, and over in a village called Fitzwilliam I saw a woman about her height and build in deep mourning."

"Did you speak to her?"

"No. But I went to the only store in the place—manufactured an errand—and asked about her. She said to be a Mrs. Smith, from the West and recently widowed. She arrived there last Tuesday."

"Hah! And you didn't follow her?"

"Wait. She came in her own car—a five-passenger touring car I learned afterward—with a chauffeur and a maid, both of whom claim to have worked for her for years. She has taken a furnished house. Now, I don't

## COUNTY NEWS BRIEFS

### Hazel Green

The Christmas program at the school house will be Thursday evening, December 23 at 8 o'clock. The teachers, Miss Albee and Miss Paulson, are preparing a very interesting program.

Miss Cobalt, County Health Nurse and Dr. Brown made dental examination of pupils of the school. The children showed a need of attention to teeth.

Hilda Stripling has returned to her sister's, Mrs. Herman Wacken from several weeks visit with Mrs. G. G. Looney.

Mrs. Kettlinger and daughter, Mrs. Kane of Mill City spent several days last week as guests of Mr. and Mrs. Edward Dunigan, Sr.

Mrs. Kettlinger is a sister-in-law of Mrs. Dunigan. Mrs. Kane who is a teacher in Mill City school, was taking examination.

The Sunday school will have a short program December 26th at 11 o'clock. A travelogue, "Now When Jesus Was Born," will be given.

Mrs. Ougust Zelinski of Portland is visiting her son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Max Wood. Mrs. Carl Johnson has returned from the hospital in Portland, being somewhat improved.

W. O. Zelinski's daughter, Edith is home for Christmas holidays. She has been with her aunt, Mrs. August Zelinski of Portland for several months.

R. C. Miles has moved to Salem

believe Roberta has enough money to do all that—but the woman did move like her.

"She's probably cleared out by this time. But since you've advertised this affair all over the place, we'll go and see. Come along."

(To be continued)

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and Peter Woelke onto the farm again. Mr. Miles exchanged Salem property with Mr. Woelke for farm early in spring. Having traded again each are back where they were.

### Liberty

Community Christmas tree, general good time, and program will be held at Liberty hall next Thursday evening at 8 o'clock.

December 24th. It is hoped that a large audience will be present to hear the program, which is given mostly by the school pupils assisted by their teachers. The following program will be given:

A Christmas Song—Primary Room  
Watching for Santa, Victor Gibson  
Santa Claus and a Mouse

Ruth Lyons  
The Return, a Dialogue

Advanced Rooms  
A Boy's Query—Pete Gossen  
Song, Christmas Everywhere

Intermediate Room  
Santa and Fractions, Verda Rains  
A Christmas Wish—Jack Dasch

Mother Decides, a Dialogue  
Scared—Melvin Cleveland  
Recitation—Charles Cunningham

Song, Welcome to Santa Claus  
Helen Dasch, Lester Browning  
Recitation—Ruby Jones

A New-fashioned Christmas, a Dialogue—Intermediate Room  
Grandma's Gift

Pay Coffey and Roberta Spoon  
Christmas Fessimist—Ray Wolfe  
The Run-a-way Carols

The Advanced Rooms  
Vocal Duet—Mr. and Mrs. Hannon  
Instrumental Solo, Velleda Ohmart

### Liberty

Do not forget the community Christmas tree and program Thursday evening the 23d at 8 o'clock.

Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Coffey have returned from Portland, where they have been visiting relatives.

Mrs. K. Holder left for Bay City last Friday to be with her daughter, Miss Miriam, who is ill.

Frank Hirubetz, who is a student at O. A. C., is spending the holidays with his parents here.

The Liberty school will have one week's, closing the 24th, and resuming work January 3rd. D. A. Hoag organized another

## ROBERTSON SPEAKS TO HISTORY CLASS

### Former Diplomatic Attache Discusses Conditions in Europe and Africa

Major C. A. Robertson addressed the history class at the Salem high school Tuesday afternoon on the general subject of Europe and northern Africa. The major speaks six languages fluently.

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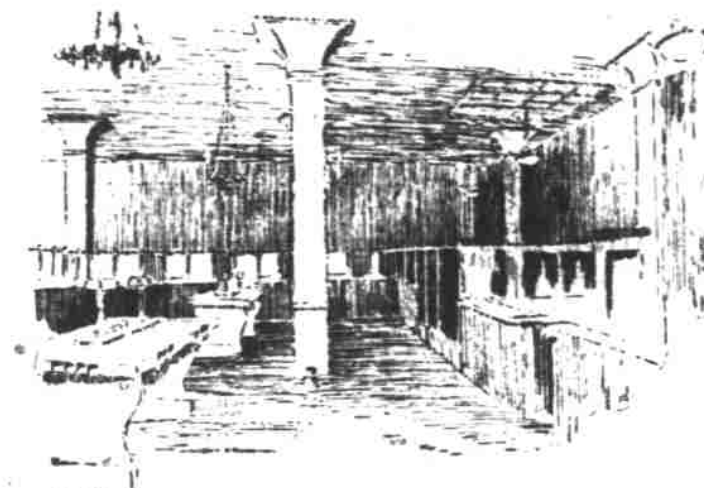
Wanda, the three year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Allen, is seriously ill of pneumonia.

Each room at school will have a Christmas tree next Friday after the afternoon recess. At this time the pupils will exchange presents.

ently and was for a number of years in the diplomatic service, being stationed at different times with nearly every embassy in Europe.

In his address yesterday the major stressed the point that now, the United States having been placed as a leader among the nations, it is vitally necessary that our young men prepare themselves for diplomatic work as well as commercial. He advocated learning one language, at least, thoroughly and that special attention be given to the subject of history. Heretofore he stated educational institutions have devoted themselves largely to education along commercial lines, but it is now necessary that diplomatic material be developed that we may be represented with ability and dignity in the courts of Europe.

Major Robertson has been ordered to report at army headquarters in Washington, D. C. and expects to leave about January 1 with the hope that he will be re-assigned to Salem for at least three months before going abroad.



## The Merriest of All!

The United States National Bank wishes for you and yours the Merriest Christmas of all.

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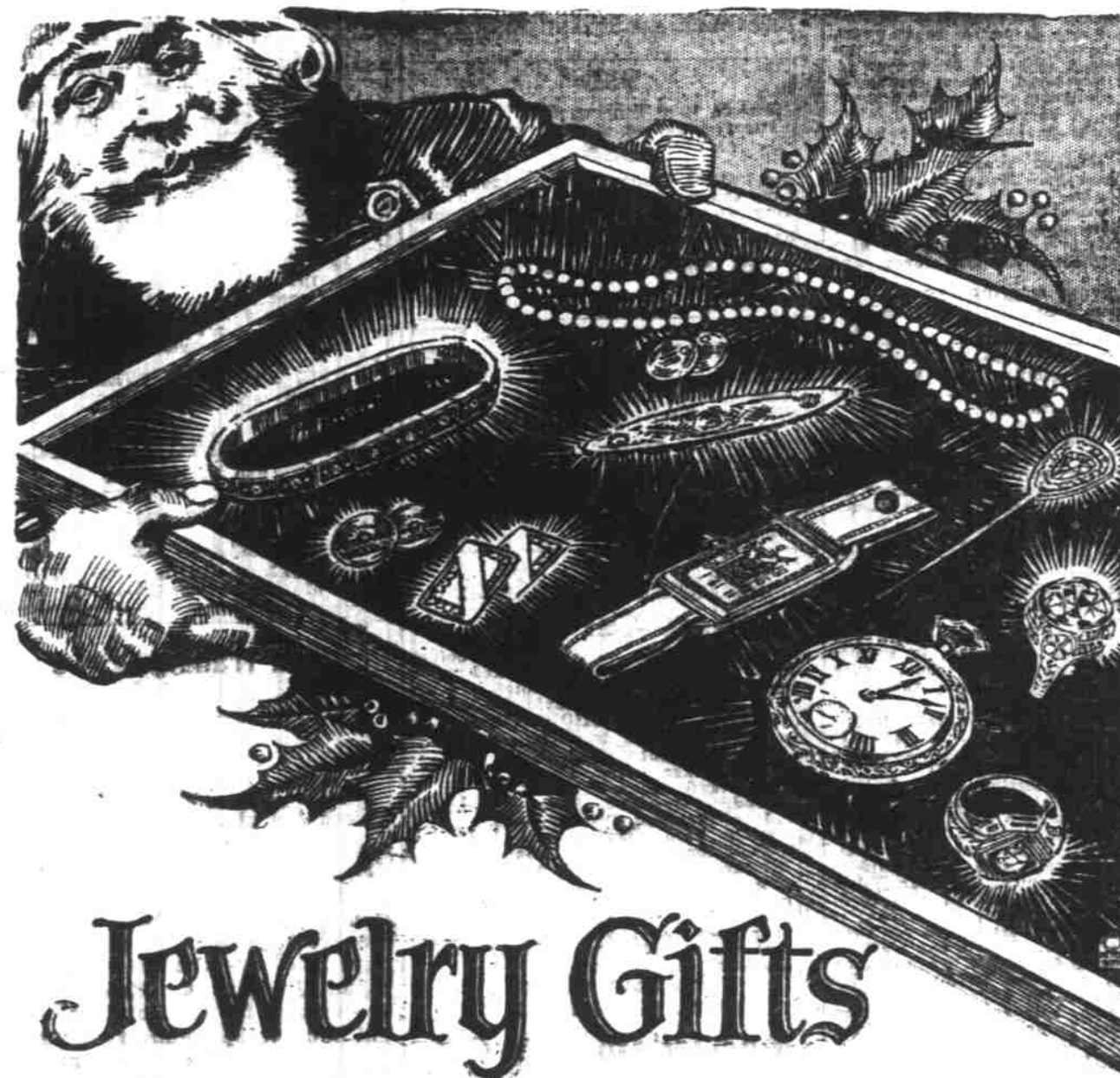
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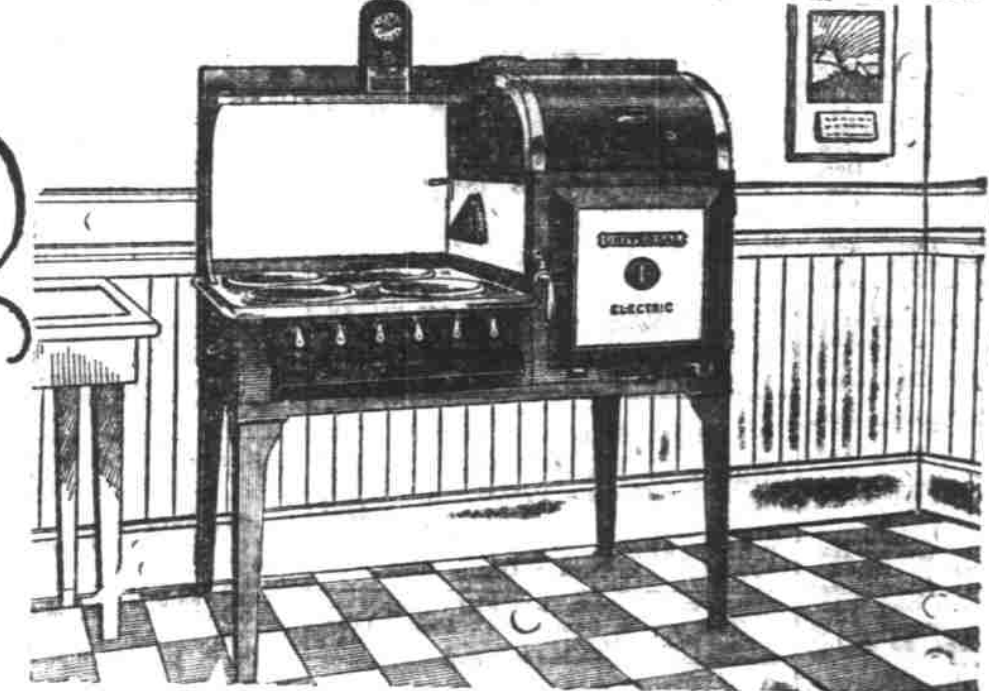
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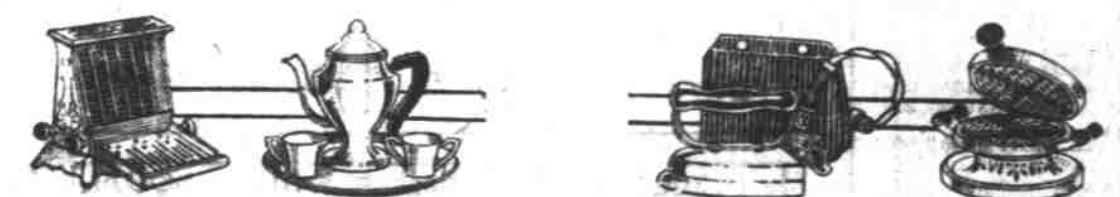
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