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Stranger Than Fiction

That truth is stranger than fiction is again proved by the confessions of Chester Buchtel, Portland fireman firebug, whose amusement, while off duty and not attending Klavern meetings, consisted of setting fires over town. He admits having set over 50 fires to property valued at over $500,000 with resultant damage of $100,000, and is suspected of having set as many more.

Apparently this pyromaniac not only enjoyed the childish fascination of seeing fire burn but got a great thrill out of eluding apprehension, of pitting his wits as a fire-bug against those of apprehending officialdom, the same sort of exaltation and excitement the criminal enjoys in "pulling" a clever "job". Circling the city in auto or motorcycle at a mad burst of speed, he had little difficulty in baffling his pursuers.

Almost as strange and unbelievable as Buchtel's exploits in firing any structure handy, was the fact that for three years he operated successfully in the employ and under the eyes of the fire department. Long suspected and shadowed, it took the department over a year to apprehend him, although his fires were almost nightly occurences.

All of which is prima facie evidence that the Portland fire department is in the same brilliant class with the Portland police department, when it comes to catching criminals. "Inch and a quarter Jimmy" himself never had more fun in eluding pursuit and capture than the still cleverer Mr. Buchtel, indeed the latter made the best record for he was constantly under suspicion and observation.

Both the Portland fire and police departments, indeed most of the departments of the metropolis, are suffering from a common malady, a severe attack of Ku-Klux-Klanitis which has undermined morale and destroyed discipline and made it easy picking for fire-bugs as well as crooks. Until a surgical operation is performed and this cancer of the body politics is cut-out, conditions will grow worse rather than better.

Freak Legislation

That Oregon is still the "fool of the family" when it comes to freak legislation is shown by the passage of the Dennis bill submitting to referendum the amendment abating all income and inheritance tax legislation for a period of 15 years. Hitherto the freak legislation submitted to popular vote has been on radical and revolutionary lines, such as single tax, soviet government, compulsory liability insurance, and discriminating legislation designed to drive out capital and hamper business, but now the reactionaries are utilizing the same proccedure of appeal to the people to force through programs of tax exemption. The popular appeal thus fits both feet of the body politics.

This Dennis resolution is really bunk, for there is nothing to prevent its repeal, should it carry, at the next election and as nothing is more uncertain or changing than public hysteria that decides elections, there is no guarantee of stability or permanence of public policy under direct popular government.

Oregon will get some advertisement out of the freak proposal, based upon the similar Florida enactment, but if passed, will not experience the same reaction as Florida. Conditions are not at all parallel, for Florida is the winter playground of the millionaires of the east and Oregon's location and climate forever bar this class of wealthy pleasure seekers. It will gratify the rich tax-dodgers in our midst, but even if passed will not materially stimulate industrial development.

An extensive and expensive campaign will probably follow to induce people to vote for the measure. We will likely be told that hundreds of millions await investment here, if the amendment passes, and that it unlocks the door of boundless prosperity. Probably this campaign is the inspiration of the measure, for immense contributions from those affected will afford fine picking for the political propagandists, who will thus be assured of prosperity whether their incomes are taxed or not.

BRANDON OPERA COMPANY SCORES IN "ROBIN HOOD"

By Harry N. Crain

Romance stirred again in the hearts of those who saw the Brandon Comic Opera company in the peer of all English light operas, "Robin Hood," at the Grand theatre last night. Like the afternoon matinee presentation of "The Mikado" it was such a treat as Salem is seldom privileged to enjoy, admirably staged and wonderfully sung.

In a manner, the offerings of yesterday at the Grand were like greetings from old friends, for the Brandon company brings back most of the faces that were so familiar in the American Light Opera company that won the hearts of Salem theater goers two years ago, when they presented much the same repertoire as are included in the current programs of the Brandon company.

Least and last to be forgotten is Ed Andrews, whose characterization of the sheriff of Nottingham was one of the high lights of last night's "Robin Hood," as it was two years ago. Through the better part of the three acts the audience smiled and laughed with Andrews and with his shadow, Sir Guy Osborne, as portrayed by Geo. "Ole" Olesen.

Harry Pfeil was back in the double role of Robert of Huntington, and Robin Hood, singing and acting his part with a finish that was refreshing. His interpretation of the role was one of the best that has ever been seen here, and marks a strong lead for the production.

Theo Pennington, whom illness prevented her from appearing here two years ago, starred strongly last evening as Lady Marian Fitzwalter and Maid Marian. Her voice is admirably suited to the role, and her vigor and personality were just such as make this role one of the bright spots on the American speaking and singing stage. Jessie Evans, as Alan-a-Dale, supplemented Miss Pennington's appeal with a wonderful picturization of DeKoven's jealous lover, and her rendition of "O, Promise Me" was one number standing out among a bevy of wonderful rendered selections.

The solos of Lelon Jewkes, as Will Scarlet, particularly in the opening scene of the second act in the wonderful toast song "Brown October Ale," have not been approached for excellence in anything heard in Salem recently. His voice, full and controlled, lends itself to such a role as he played last evening.

For those who heard the matinee and evening numbers of yesterday there is no wonder in the success of the Brandon company during the three solid weeks it played in Portland. It is a remarkably well balanced company boasting of talent that is extraordinary in its excellence.

Tonight the Brandon's offer "The Roberstan Girl," that most tuneful of American light operas, and tomorrow night their vehicle will be "The Spring Maid."

HUGHES TELLS WHAT'S WORTH WHILE IN LIFE

Washington, Feb. 23. — The things of life which he finds "most worth while" were recounted last night by Secretary Hughes in an address before the Vaughan Bible class of the Calvary Baptist church.

Perfection of the individual life, he said, depended upon health, knowledge, loyalty, character, faith and the cultivation of spiritual life.

The "Christian character or balanced life," he declared, means "faith without credulity; conviction without bigotry; charity without condescension; courage without pugnacity; self respect without vanity; humility without obsequousness; and love of humanity without sentimentality."

TODAY'S CROSS WORD PUZZLE

HORIZONTAL

1. Limbs
4. In bed
8. Propelling instrument
10. Personal pronoun
11. Minute particles
14. Note well (ab.)
15. Compound of iron
17. Verb
18. Within
20. To desire something
25. Bronz Roman coin
27. Plant seed-bearing organ
29. To transgress
31. Sooner than
32. Aper of gentility
33. Fly (past tense)

SOLUTION OF YESTERDAY'S PUZZLE

VERTICAL

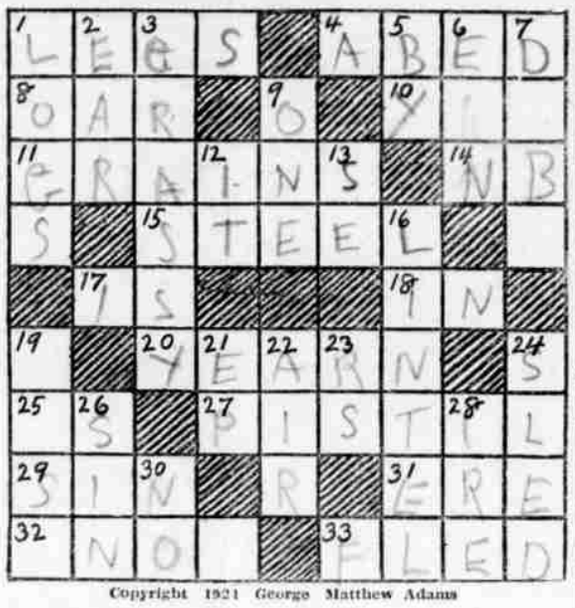
1. Cut timber
2. Organ of hearing
3. Abounding in grass
5. Near
6. Long Period time
7. Blows
9. Single
12. Italy (ab.)
13. South East (ab.)
16. Top piece of doorway
19. Fish
21. Epistle (ab.)
22. Melody
23. Red Sea (ab.)
24. Vehicle on runners
26. Wickedness
28. Anger
30. Negation

HOW TO SOLVE THE CROSS WORD PUZZLE

The way to solve the Cross Word Puzzle is to fill in the white squares of the diagram with the words which agree with the accompanying definitions. The definitions are numbered to correspond with the numbers on the diagram.

Any word defined in the text under "HORIZONTAL" will begin at its number, shown on the diagram, and will extend all the way across to the first black space to the right of that number. That is, the word must begin in the square that contains its identifying number, and extend as far as the white squares continue uninterruptedly

Any word defined under "VERTICAL" will also begin, in the white space that contains its number, but will extend downward as far as the white spaces remain uninterruptedly.



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A Modern Marriage

An Absorbing Novel
By IDAH McGLONE GIBSON

THE SOUL SPEAKS

When Kathlyn Evans refused to accuse her husband even to his lawyer Jim Kirby interposed pityingly: "It may be of some comfort, Kathlyn, to know that we have run Vernon Stedman's alibi to earth. I'll tell you more about it this afternoon.

"Are you sure you saw no one about the door when you and Rod were bending over Foss' body?"

"No one at all. Gentlemen, I must ask you to excuse me. I am going to dress and go to Rod. He needs me more than he ever did."

"Please wait until afternoon," begged Jim Kirby. "An hour or two now will not make much difference, and if you have some good news to tell him it will pay for his waiting."

"Oh, Jim, please don't get my courage up only to disappoint it."

"Don't worry, little woman, I think it is all going to come out right.'

Starmount looked at Jim Kirby in surprise, but he thought he found there only a desire to comfort Kathlyn.

"Have you seen the first installment of your story in this morning's paper?"

"It is not a mistake, Kathlyn, Dick, give her those papers."

"You are sure it will help Rod?"

"I certainly am sure. The fact that you still believe in him and still love him will have a great effect on the minds of the readers. Jim himself will tell you that most murder cases are tried in the news papers before they are in the courts."

"But, Jim, you understand, do you not, that in my manuscript I have told that after that time when I first saw Rod with Sada Fillmore we drifted further apart, only to come together again? I know now we both love each other better than life itself.

"At first I tried not to seem any different when Rod came to see me but he wouldn't let me. He would try to explain his actions to me and wanted me to tell him all about mine.

"I said to him one day: 'Don't you know that that is the one thing I wanted to avoid when I proposed our unique partnership? I'm not asking you to explain Sada Fillmore to me and certainly I shall not explain Elton Foss nor any other man to you.'

"This of course infuriated Rod to such an extent that he went out, slamming the door, and I, to show my disdain, accepted the attentions of Elton Foss more and more often even though every time I did so I had to expect a worse quarrel than the last over it.

"You see, Jim, I have put all this in even though it might give what seems like a motive for Rod's alleged act.

"But you and Dick may use as much as you think best."

"Jim is not going to use any of that," said Dick decisively.

"Yes I am. I am going to use all of it. Do you realize what a fine argument it is for the conventional marriage?"

"Yes, of course I do, but I also realize that it will probably send Rod to the chair."

There was a low moan. Both men started for the bed. Kathlyn had fainted.

"Let's get out of here. I can stand no more of this," Starmount said roughly.

He started for the door and Jim, picking up the last pages of Kathlyn's manuscript ,followed him calling the nurse as he left.

When the men reached Fifth avenue they separated, Jim Kirby going toward the subway station and Dick hailing a taxi to take him to the jail. Although they both were going in the same general direction each evidently wanted to follow some personal theory which he was not ready to divulge to the other.

"Remember, Jim," were Starmount's last words, "you are not to publish that manuscript you have in your pocket until I see it."

As Starmount rode alone in the taxi he could not help but wonder if his friend Rodney Evans had not killed Elton Foss.

Jim Kirby's words came back to him, when he said "Even you or I migh shoot a man if we found he had insulted the woman we loved."

With this thought in his mind he grected Rodney solemnly. Before Rodney could ask a question he said, "Rod, answer me as you would before the bar of God, did you kill Elton Foss?"

"Have they arrested Kathlyn?" he asked quickly.

"No, she has practically been proved innocent. Those were not her finger prints on the gun."

"Then there is no use for me to lie, Dick. I did not kill Elton Foss."

(Continued Tomorrow)

MAJOR GENERAL WILSON OF CIVIL WAR FAME DEAD

Wilmington, Del., Feb. 23.— Major General James Harrison Wilson, U. S. A., retired, last of the corps commanders in the Union army during the Civil war, died at his home here today.

General Wilson was 87 years old.

After his retirement from the army, following his service during the war with Spain and the Boxer rebellion in China, he lived in Wilmington.

He leaves one daughter, Mrs. Henry B. Thompson of this city.

Quick Starting SHELL GASOLINE

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

DUMB DORA

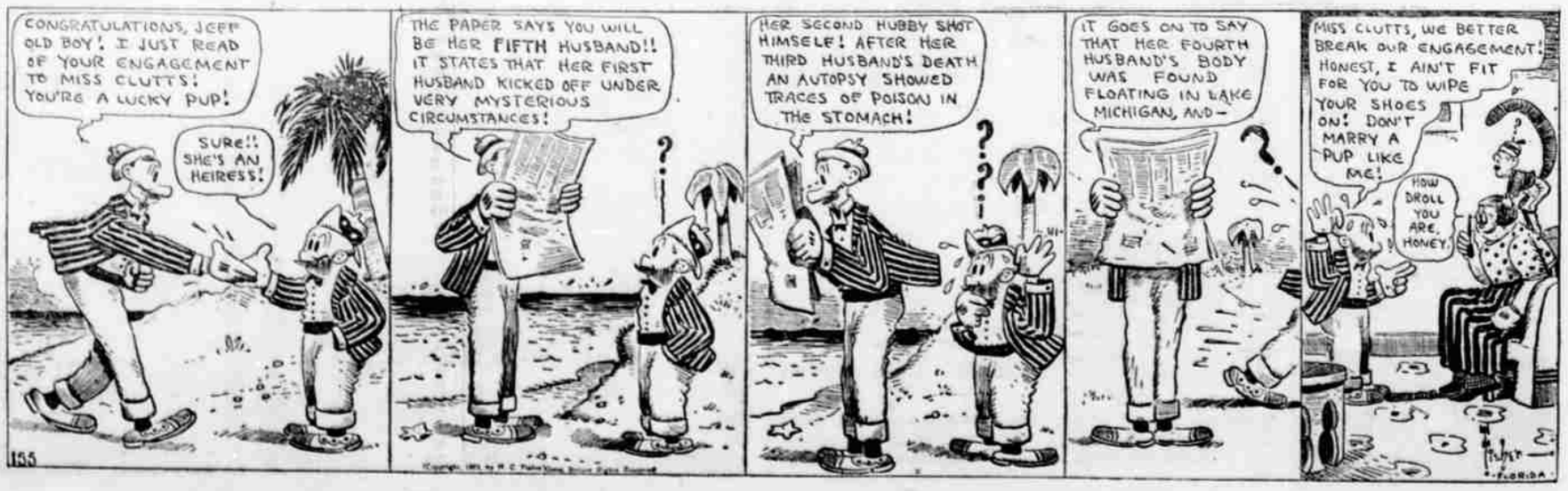
(Substituting for Barney Google, during Billy DeBeck's illness)

KRAZY KAT

Exercising Their Sense of Humors

By Herriman

MUTT AND JEFF

When It Comes to Love, Jeff Jumps First and Then Looks.

By Bud Fisher