Floyd Gibbons

ADVENTURERS' CLUB

Hello, Everybody!

Rat Steals Girl's Hair

By FLOYD GIBBONS
Famous Headline Hunter.

AND here's as strange a true tale, boys and girls, as Poe ever conjured up in his most imaginative moments.

While the club secretary jots down the name of Mrs. Ralph Johnson on my well-worn note book, I'll spin you the yarn.

Incidentally, we've had a lot of hair-raising tales in this "thrill corner" of ours, but in this one Mrs. Johnson's hair not only rose on end, but it actually LEFT HER HEAD!

Mrs. Johnson was unmarried and not yet twenty when her unusually terrifying experience took place, but, she says, if she lives to be a great-grandmother she will never forget it.

I can do her one better. I claim that when you've read it, you'll never forget it. I know I won't.

Margaretta—that was her name then—used to sleep on a glass-enclosed sleeping porch and the head of her bed was close to a window.

One night as she lay dreaming that a big man with a pair of scissors was chasing her to cut off her hair—she wore it long then—she felt a distinct tug on her scalp and woke up with a start.

Hair Pulled Out by "Ghost."

The sensation that her hair had been pulled was so strong that she turned on the light and looked around the room.

Seeing nothing alarming, however, Margaretta says, she decided that she had been dreaming the whole thing and went back to sleep. She took the precaution, however, of closing the window at her head, but as nothing more happened that night she said nothing to her family about the incident.

The next night the same thing occurred. She was awakened from a sound sleep by a stinging sensation on her scalp exactly as though some one had pulled her hair.

The feeling was so vivid this time that she knew she had not been dreaming, and she sat up terror-stricken in bed and called to her father.

Well, you know how fathers are. Margaretta's was no exception, and he just laughed and said she had a good imagination and suggested that she go back to sleep. But Margie wasn't ready for sleep yet so she did a little sleuthing herself.

She looked the room over very carefully—not forgetting to look under the bed—but all she could find out of place was a little boudoir doll that she had left sitting up on the dresser.

The doll had fallen over on its side with its hair all disarranged and that doll had natural hair!

Was She Mad or Dreaming?

Well, sir, Margie began to think she was about due for the psychopathic ward. She glanced again at the window by the head of her bed. The window was closed, but Margie swears she saw the shade move!

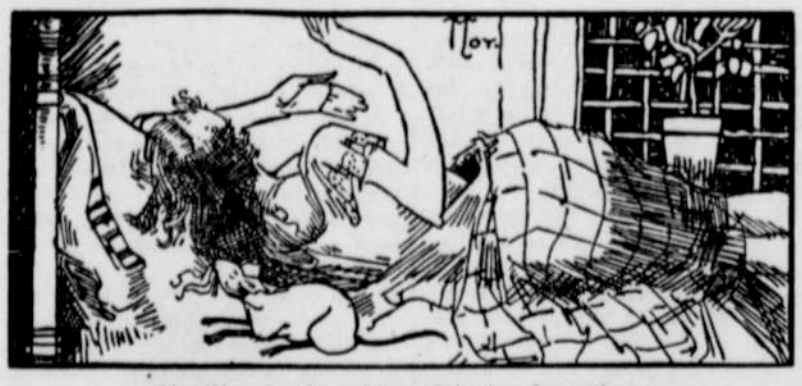
All thought of sleep driven now from her mind, the panic-stricken girl kept the light on and taking a book tried to read. Her hand strayed to her scalp and she found it sore to touch.

She lay there quiet as a mouse, listening for the slightest sound and wondering fearfully if the house were haunted.

Suddenly Margie sat straight up in bed and nearly screamed—the window shade at her head had rattled as though shaken by a terrific gale.

But the curtains of another open window were not even stirring! Margie says she was now simply scared to death.

The rattling of the shade soon stopped and she lay shivering as the long hours of the night slowly dragged on. Daylight—that solver of



She Was Awakened by a Stinging Sensation.

Night's mysteries—came on and the exhausted girl dozed. Her frayed nerves were getting some much needed rest when suddenly every nerve in her body tingled with terror.

In Which the Ghost Becomes Alive.

An ear-piercing scream—from inside the house—was the cause.

Margie was out of bed in a flash—her own terror forgotten in her concern for her mother. The unstrung girl was the first to reach the kitchen, where her mother had been preparing breakfast, and she found her mother pale and speechless—holding her foot firmly against a closed drawer.

And in that drawer was a great big rat!

Well, sir, Margie says that her relief at finding it was only a rat that had frightened her mother almost made her faint.

She had expected—after her own weird experience—to find a ghost, or at least a "Jack the Ripper," in the kitchen, but, strange as it seems, she was soon to learn an amazing fact. Here it is:

The rat and her hair-pulling ghost were one and the same!

Yes, sir, and hold on to your own hair, boys and girls, while I explain.

After that rat had been dispatched—incidentally by Margie's future husband—her mother found that the lady rat—who was expecting a blessed event—had been making a nest in the cellar.

And what do you suppose Mrs. Rat had been using to feather her nest?

You're right! Margie's hair! Her mother found strands of her daughter's hair and strands of the doll's hair lining the rat's nest!

Wow! Is that a hair-raiser or not?

Thanks, Mrs. Johnson. I remember my grandmother wearing a "rat" in her hair, but you're the first girl I've ever heard of wearing a live rodent and I hope it won't come into fashion. Don't you?

Hugh Bradley Says:

Johnny McKee Had Right Dope On His Horse

HIS friends said old Johnny McKee was stubborn. You could guess that from the slant of his jaw. Strangers blurted that he was a fool. You knew that was wrong by the gleam from the shrewd gray eyes. Yet, somehow, you could not blame the strangers. It did seem foolish for this trainer to keep insisting that Jim Dandy would win the Travers stakes. Everyone knew that the oldest of American turf classics would be a two-horse race.

Sande.

Ridden by Earl Sande, greatest of jockeys, William Woodward's Gallant Fox would be the favorite.

They could gain only one dollar for each two bets on him, but a full half of the 30,000 who swarmed through the gates here on August 16, 1930, were eager for this investment. The others waved $5 bills which would earn six more if Harry Payne Whitney's Whichone.

It was no place for an ordinary horse. With Sonny Workman in Whichone's saddle the two greatest colts and the two greatest jockeys would be dueling. Jim Dandy's owner knew it so well he remained away from the track. The bookies laughed as they raised the odds to 100 to 1 against the chestnut colt.

So old Johnny McKee stood alone. Perhaps the trainer's close shaven jaw stuck out a bit more grimly when he noted the odds, but he thought his own thoughts and was silent. When the bugle sounded he whispered to Jim Dandy just once and stood there alone among the 30,000 watching the parade to the post.

A flash of tape, a confused roar, two smoothly gliding machines move to the front! The duel is even as they dart past the clubhouse turn. There, Sonny Workman bends closer to Whichone's ears.

Whichone goes to the front, but Gallant Fox is not to be run off his feet as the Whitney stable hopes.

Earl Sande croons songs of the western plains to his mount and music has its charms today. At the furlong pole the Fox draws even again, at the quarter he gets his neck ahead.

It is the high point of the race, or so they think. Now that the Fox has taken command he never will be headed.

Smart Guys Forgot About Jim Dandy

Yes? You have forgotten Sonny Workman and the brown colt which was king of the two-year-olds. Clods of mud catapult under frantic hoofs as they fly to the far turn. Whichone moves up, is a scant head in the lead.

You have forgotten something else.

Inside, next to the rail, where the mud has not yet been churned into glue, a horse is slipping through, sailing past the leaders.

His chestnut coat is spattered, for a moment you do not know him. But old Johnny McKee has known all along and yet the white creeps under the florid mask of his face and thick fingers tighten.

Surely he is only a false alarm, breathe the 30,000. Surely he cannot outrun the greatest colts of the year. Wait a second, he will shoot his bolt and then drop back.

It is a long second and then even the doubters must believe. Daylight grows between Jim Dandy and the champions. Sande sings to Gallant Fox and pleads but it is no use. Soon Whichone slows, seems to be in distress. Jim Dandy is six lengths in front, merely galloping. He still is there at the wire while his jockey looks back and grins, wonders what has become of the champs, who had led.

Workman

Johnny McKee's gray hair bristles in triumph, the red is back in his face as he comes to the judges' stand. He pats Jim Dandy behind the ears, whispers to him and they listen to the roar of the crowd.

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They're All Tough, According to Mr. Klem

HIS word is law. He averages 120 decisions a day for 154 days of the year. The careers of scores of other men and the interest of millions can be swayed by his judgment. His decrees must be delivered instantly. He has been doing it for 31 years. I asked him:

"Bill, do you honestly believe that you never called one wrong?"

The man leans forward. A heavy, almost pudgy hand beats twice against his left breast in the neighborhood of his heart. He speaks earnestly, slowly:

"No, never have I missed one here."

"Bill, don't you think that it is possible that you could miss one?"

Again the man leans forward. His eyes are small, of a faded blue. They are not eyes that flash. You might call them expressionless, yet somehow they express the intensity of the man, his calm certainty. Once more the hand is raised against the left breast.

"I could miss one, maybe. But never from here."

The man is William J. Klem, veteran National league umpire and generally credited with being the best in the business. "I defy any man," he says, "to prove that I ever called a foul ball fair or a fair ball foul."

Braggadocio? Vanity? A Gilbert and Sullivan character? No, not if you see the man and talk with him.

"Bill, how do you know that you never missed one?"

"If I had missed one I would know it here." The hand comes back to the breast.

Piece by piece the man is not impressive. He is stocky and slightly over medium height, but his bowed legs make him seem smaller. His ears are large and stick out. Ball players call them loving cups, referring to the handles of such trophies. But they never call them that in front of Bill.

Bill Klem.

Not an impressive figure. But watch him out on the baseball field. There is a stubbornness, a dogged certainty, a sincerity about that rigid frame that is compelling.

"Bill, they say that you are the best umpire in the business. Nevertheless there are arguments at times. Some of the players must really think then that you have missed one. What about it?"

The man leans forward again. He points with a stubby finger. "Right here on this field I said that a player who made a dive for a ball in the outfield didn't catch it. But he came up with it in his hands. He said he caught it. They believed him." There is a pause. "But two months later he told the truth." Nothing more.

Klem umpired in his first World series in 1908. He has been in 17 of them all during his 31 years in the major leagues. "No other umpire has ever been in as many." He is not boasting. He is stating a fact.

"Bill, what was the toughest decision you ever had to make?"

The heavy shoulders tighten. "They are all tough."

"Bill, suppose another umpire overruled you?" He is almost startled. "They couldn't do it."

"Suppose a manager disagreed with you and thought that another umpire was in a better condition to see the play?"

"He could ask, but only if I give him permission."

When Klem was a young minor league umpire the star of one of the teams was known as an umpire-fighter. One day Bill made a decision which went against the star's team. The star came running over wrathfully. Bill walked forward a few steps. Then with his spiked toe he drew a line in the dirt, directly in the path of the star. He stood behind that line.

There was a hush. The crowd knew that something was about to happen. The player halted. Klem stood there calmly a moment. The player returned to his position. All umpires do that when forced to extremes. Perhaps it was Bill's move that marked the end of umpire-fighters.

He originated a new school of umpiring. Each decision is made clear to the crowd. There is an emphatic wave of the right hand to denote a strike, a toss of the left hand for a ball. Hands are spread palms down and moved parallel to the ground if the man is safe. An upward perk of the right arm indicates that the man is out.