

Nothing Venture

by Patricia Wentworth

CHAPTER 13
HORROR VISITS NAN

NAN sat up in bed in the dark. Something had awakened her, but she didn't know what it was. At first the darkness seemed to all the room, pressing in upon her so that the posts of the bed, the red hangings, which she had pushed back as far as possible, and the big wardrobe, which was somewhere on the opposite side of the room, were all lost in an even velvet dark. Then the curtain at the far window moved in some unseen current of air, and a pale luminous streak divided the darkness. The immediate effect was to make the room seem immensely large.

A moment before, everything had been pressing in upon her; she could have touched the walls with her outstretched hand. And now, with a puff of wind, everything was immensely far away. The suddenness of it made her feel dizzy. She watched the streak of light, and tried to steady herself. It came and went, and came and went again.

Nan sat bolt upright, one hand on the bed and the other at her throat. She had waked like that, and she had not moved yet. Then, as the curtain was first sucked in, against the window and then on a veering gust blown back into the room, her hand dropped and she took a long breath. It was bright moonlight outside. The blown curtain let the moonlight in, and filled the room with an uncertain dusk. She could see the bed-posts against it, and the wardrobe like a black cave. Then everything was dark again as the curtain fell back into place.

She drew another long breath. It must have been the wind that had waked her. She pushed back her hair and relaxed. It was rather horrid to find yourself sitting up in the dark and not know how you had got there. For a moment she had not known where she was—in what bed, in what room, in what place. She pulled up a pillow behind her back and watched the moonlight run across the floor like a wave fanned up by the tide. Like a wave it ran back again. She could see all the furniture now, mysteriously soft and large. A pleasant drowsiness began to steal over her. She thought back to the evening before. Jervis had taken her over the house. She had made great friends with Bran. She wished people were as easy to make friends with as dogs.

A drowsy warmth flowed over her; she slipped a little further down in the bed. She was slipping down into soft flowing waters of sleep, when all of a sudden they ebbed away and she was awake again, her heart beating and her eyes staring into the darkness. It wasn't the flapping of the curtain that had waked her before, and it wasn't the flapping of the curtain that had waked her now. It was a sound—not in the room—somewhere else. Now that she heard it, she could remember that she had heard it before. The memory was like an echo just caught on the edge of sound. She did not yet know what it was that she had heard. And then, as she listened, it came again—a faint whining noise, followed by what sounded like a footstep. It was so faint that it puzzled her to guess why it should have roused her from her sleep.

She threw back the bed-clothes and sat on the edge of the bed, listening all the while. The sound came again—a long faint whine, and a distant padding step. The two things together said Bran; but instead of reassurance a wave of fear rushed in. Bran—downstairs in the hall—padding up and down and whining. . . . It frightened her beyond her own power of knowing why.

She slipped down on the floor, went barefoot to the door, and stood with the knob in her hand, summoning up her courage to open it. The knob was cold, and very smooth with age; it was mahogany like the heavy door. Just above her hand

there was a bolt. She could slip the bolt and get back into bed again. She turned the knob and opened the door; and as she did so, the curtain blew in with the draught and the moonlight ran across the floor. She stepped outside and closed the door behind her, holding to it. There was a soft woolly mat under her feet.

Her room was at the end of a short passage. The passage gave upon the stair head. The dog's whine and the sound of his padding feet came up the well of the stair. She latched her door and went along the passage to the head of the stairs. It was not dark here. The moon struck through a long window set with painted glass, bleaching its colours and making them like colours seen in a dream. Nan leaned on the rail and looked over into the dark hall. The padding and the whining had stopped. She called softly.

"Bran—Bran—" and immediately she heard him take the stair. She saw him for a moment, huge and black against the lighted window, said his name again, and then he was pressing against her, jerking his head up under her hand and whimpering.

"What is it?" said Nan. "What is it, Bran?" He nuzzled her hand and whined. All at once Nan was twice as frightened as she had been before. She wanted to get back to her room and bolt herself in. She took Bran by the collar, and he ran with her. She was breathing hard as she shot the bolt.

When she turned from the door, she saw Bran reared on his hind legs at the window with the curtain blowing round him. The moonlight threw a monstrous shadow almost to her feet. His nails scraped on the sill. She ran to him and pulled away the curtain.

"What is it? What's the matter, Bran?" He quivered and blew against the glass. With her hand on his neck she could feel his hackles rise. She pressed against him and looked out. The window looked to the southwest. It was open at the top. Bran pushed the glass with his nose and whimpered. It was a heavy old-fashioned window, and Nan strained as she raised it. The wind flooded the room—a soft, damp wind—and she and Bran leaned out together.

The terrace beneath the window looked like grey blotting-paper with symmetrical blots of ink at regular intervals. The blots were flowerbeds full of crimson and scarlet and orange and flame-coloured snapdragons. They had been brilliant under the grey sweep of the rain; now, under the moon, they were blots of ink. It was queer to think of all those bright colours asleep.

The terrace was wide. A low balustrade guarded it. Then the grass fell away, shadowy, mysterious, to the unseen ravine, whose waters made a deep undertone to the sighing of the wind.

All at once the moonlight drained away. And then under her hand she felt Bran's great throat muscles thrum to a growl too faint to reach her ears. She pressed closer to him and whispered.

"What is it?" He hung up his head impatiently. The thrumming went on. A gleam of light slipped out between two burrying clouds. A far off rumble seemed to answer Bran.

Nan rubbed her cheek against his ear. "Darling lamb—don't you like thunder? Is there going to be a storm?" He shook himself free and leaned forward. She could hear him growling now. A pale violet flare changed the sky, and was gone again. Bran quivered and snuffed the wind. Nan pulled at his collar, and might just as well have pulled at the hasp of the window.

A second flare lit everything with a sudden brilliance. Nan saw the black shadow of the ravine, the ink-black trees beyond it, and the curve of the cliff. It was when it was gone that she knew she had seen something else—a black shape on the edge of the dark ravine. And the shape was the shape of Robert Leonard.

Another flash, and he was gone. (Copyright, 1932, Lippincott) Nan and Jervis walk, in Monday's installment, under the shadow of tragedy.

BEAUTIFUL QUILTS SHOWN AT C. OF C.

Two beautiful quilts, one of a butterfly design quilted in the spider web pattern and the other a Dresden plate, with quilting on the shell lines, are on display in the

chamber of commerce window. The butterfly quilt was made by Mrs. Frances Probstfield, and the Dresden plate designed quilt, by Mrs. Lucy Benschoter, both of this city. Mrs. Benschoter also has on display a hooked rug, the design of which is in the form of a sailing vessel.

Work on both of the quilts and the rug is of excellent quality, and has been attracting much attention in the windows, several ladies having been seen to stop and jot down the patterns.

WIFE OF DEAN SELLS STORY TO SYNDICATE

Of interest to her many friends in southern Oregon is appearance of the first installment of Sally Elliott Allen's novel in the American Weekly this week. "The Beret From Paris" is the title of the novel, which

is introduced with colorful illustrations on the front page of the weekly. Mrs. Allen, who is the wife of Dean Eric W. Allen of the school of journalism at the University of Oregon, spent several seasons in the Rogue River valley, when her parents resided on the Old Stage road. She is also well known among members of the university set, the Allen home being the delightful gathering place of campus folk with literary ambitions.

PINE LUMBER SHOWS INCREASE IN WEST

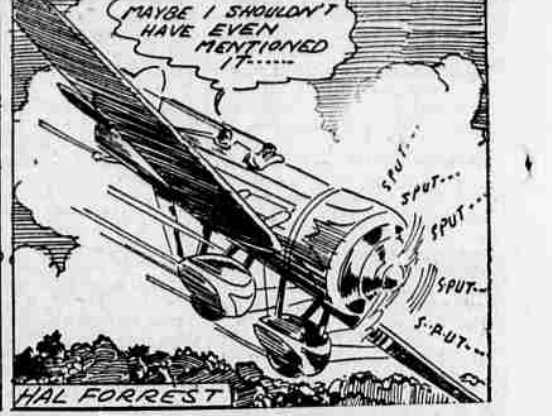
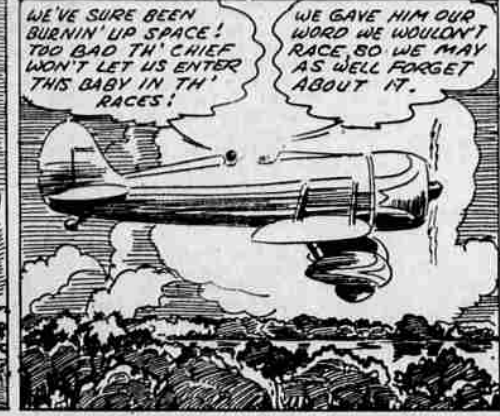
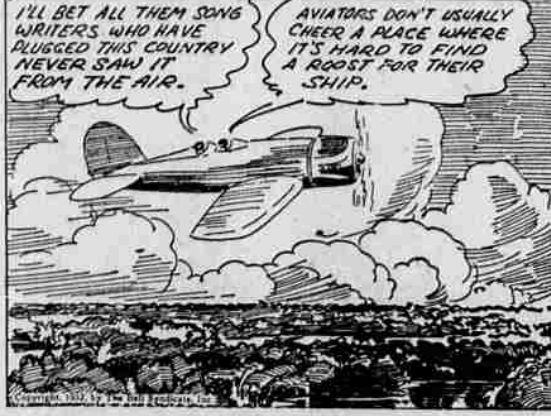
PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 12.—(AP)—An increase in current new business in the western pine territory of nearly 24 per cent over the previous week was reported by the Western Pine

association today for the week ending September 3. The volume of increase was 9,135,000 feet. Shipments were 3,004,000 feet greater, and production was up slightly. Unfilled orders increased 7,471,000 feet. "Old Betsy," the single piece of artillery used by United States forces numbering 160 in saving Fort Stephenson, at Fremont, Ohio, from 1000 British and Indians in 1812, has been replaced to its original position in the battle.

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Motor Trouble!

AFTER SHORT VISITS IN NEW ORLEANS, BIRMINGHAM, MOBILE AND ATLANTA, TOMMY AND KEETER ARE CONTINUING THEIR FLIGHT TO THE AIR ROKES IN MIAMI, TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THEIR VACATION THE BOYS ALSO STOPPED AT PENSACOLA, TALLAHASSEE AND JACKSONVILLE, THEN CUTTING DIAGONALLY ACROSS TO TAMPA AND ST. PETERSBURGH. WE NOW FIND THEM OVER THAT ALLURING, MYSTERIOUS AND OFTEN TERRIFYING REGION KNOWN AS THE EVERGLADES. (P. 15)



BOUND TO WIN—Another Surprise



By EDWIN ALGER

S'MATTER POP—It Couldn't Fail



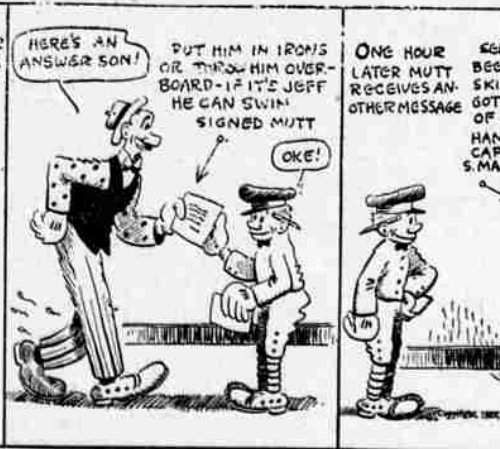
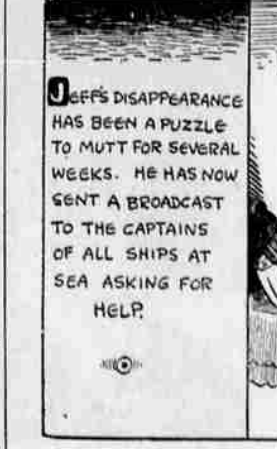
By C. M. PAYNE

THE NEBBS—Advice



By SOL HESS

MUTT AND JEFF—A Serious Mistake Is Not A Mistake



By BUD FISHER

BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManus

STUDENTS WOULD WORK FOR BOARD

A number of boys and girls attending the senior high school are anxious to obtain positions in Medford homes, where they might work for their board and room, according to C. G. Smith, principal, and an effort is being made by the school deans to place them in local residences. About twelve girls are now working for their board and room, and several others have applied for such places. The arrangements for the girls are in charge of Miss Maurine Carroll, dean of girls, and her assistant, Miss Clita Walden. Mr. Smith said that several boys had applied at his office for a place to stay and work his way through school, but until Friday, only one boy had been placed, he stated. Townspeople who are willing to take in students to help with the work, are asked to call Miss Maurine Carroll or Miss Walden for girls, and Mr. Smith, for boys.

HOOVER SPEEDS JOBLESS RELIEF

WASHINGTON, Sept. 12.—(AP)—President Hoover announced today that "in order further to aid employment" he had instructed various government branches to speed up the federal construction program by almost \$200,000,000. The president told newspapermen that Secretary Mills had notified him the necessary funds could now be made available, under the appropriations in the 1932 relief and construction act. Under this speeding up, Mr. Hoover said, the total federal construction work during the present fiscal year will exceed \$750,000,000. Speeder Rider Killed. BEND, Sept. 12.—(P)—Willis A. Rice, 70, was killed last night, and a companion, Harry Crowell, narrowly escaped injury when a speeder which they were riding over a logging railroad, 28 miles south of Bend, lost a logging train head, downgraded on a sharp curve.