

Nothing Venture

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: *Jervis Weare's already tottering world rears again under the knowledge that it sees Nan, the girl he married to save his fortune after Rosamund's treachery, who had ten years before saved his life. Nan has left the room angry after she and Ferdinand Francis fail to convince Jervis that Rosamund's cousin, Robert Leonard, is behind the series of murderous "accidents" that have threatened Jervis of late.*

Chapter 28

TENDER THOUGHTS

JERVIS went striding down the drive and, once outside the gates, turned into a field. He could have found his way blindfold, but out here under the sky and away from shadowy trees, it was not so dark. The cloudless expanse above his head was luminous and already pricked with stars. The moon had not yet risen.

As he walked, his thoughts cleared. If it was Nan who had saved his life ten years ago at the risk of her own, and if she had known this, their whole relation was on a different basis; it was profoundly affected—so profoundly, in fact, as to alter his entire point of view.

He went back to the stinging shock of Rosamund's defection on the eve of their marriage. He had believed then, and had since had this belief intensified, that it was a shameless and callous manoeuvre to supplant him as his grandfather's heir.

To counter this, he must be married by the date fixed in Ambrose Weare's will. Nan had stepped into the breach with her quiet proposal that they should marry as a matter of business. She had been very businesslike. She must have something for her trouble—a percentage. She had, in fact, put herself up for sale for ten thousand dollars. He had not known then that the money was for her sister, who was now on her way to Australia.

Jervis was aware that he himself had not bothered about being fair. By marrying Nan he spoiled Rosamund's dirty game, and that was all he had cared for at the time. In the last 24 hours he had experienced a disposition to turn his back on the events which had led up to his marriage. They made a background incompatible with Nan as he was beginning to know her.

F. F.'s story made it impossible to blot things out. He felt instead an overwhelming desire to know what had been at the back of Nan's mind when she proposed that business arrangement. He had set her down as a shrewd opportunist catching at a marriage above her hopes. But, then, why not play her best card—why not show her scar and claim his gratitude?

The shrewd opportunist would surely have done this. And Nan, according to F. F., had hidden her trump card instead of playing it. She had bidden her parentage too. No opportunist worth the name would have neglected to claim Nigel Forsyth as a father. What had been in her mind?

Something glimmered among his thoughts like a will of the wisp. It was a dancing point of light that turned a flickering gleam here and there and was gone. He would have married anyone, and picked her up anywhere. He had certainly been mad, and it was Nan who had stood between him and the abyss. The gleam touched that.

None of these things presented themselves to him in words. It could hardly be said that he recognized what the gleam showed him. His conscious thought had not greatly altered as yet. There was behind it a pressure which would compel it to alter.

Jervis turned and began to walk back by the way he had come. One thing at least he could now explain to his own satisfaction, and that was Nan's extraordinary obsession with regard to Robert Leonard. He didn't, of course, believe the story of Leonard coming down the cliff and passing the pool. That was nonsense—part of the obsession.

No—what had happened was quite obviously this—Nan had seen Leonard somewhere on the beach either that day or some other day. She had had a shock, and was feverish, and she had got Leonard mixed up with her fever. She had had a bad dream about Leonard and had tacked it on to the things that had really happened.

Jervis felt much better when he had settled this. It let Nan out, and

it let Leonard out. It explained everything perfectly. He got back to Weare to find the house dark except for a light in the hall. Monk had standing orders never to sit up. He put out the hall light and went up in the dark. As he passed Nan's door, he heard the thump of Bran's tall and faint snuffing sound. He said, "Lie down, Bran!"

As he opened his own door, the sounds ceased. He put on his light and undressed. Before he got into bed he drew the curtains back, and fell asleep while he was wondering why moonlight made everything look so still.

He waked with a start, he did not know how much later. Then he heard a sound—Bran moving in Nan's room. Restless brute! But that wouldn't have waked him. He raised himself on his hand, and as he did so, he heard a choking cry and in a moment was out of bed and at the door between the two rooms. If it was bolted. . . .

But it gave to his hand. He switched on the light, and saw Nan sitting up in bed under the crimson canopy, her eyes wide and blank with terror, and her lips parted in a gasping cry. Bran, with his forepaws on the bed, whined and licked frantically at her hair, her shoulder, her arm.

As the light went on, he growled, lung round, dropped to the floor, and bounded to meet Jervis, thrusting at him with his head and making anxious sounds in his throat.

Jervis made him lie down, harshly. His first thought was that the dog had frightened Nan. Then, as he reached the bed, he saw that her gaze was fixed neither on him nor on Bran. It had no focus; it saw nothing. It was just a wide gaze of fear.

She was sitting stiffly upright with her hands pressed down upon the bed. Her short brown hair was wildly rumpled. Her face was of an agonizing pallor, her eyes all staring pupil. She had on a childish white night-gown, rather high at the neck, and beneath it her breast rose and fell with each sobbing breath.

Jervis sat down on the edge of the bed and put a hand on her shoulder.

"Nan—what is it? Please don't be so frightened—you're all right. It was just a dream." She trembled, and he put his arm about her. "All right in a minute. Just hold on, and it'll go. Would you like a drink of water? . . . No, I won't go till you want me to."

She was small and light to hold. Another of those dreadful shudders passed over her. He felt her struggle with it, stiffening herself against his arms until she was rigid. A sudden awkward tenderness for her fear came up in him. Under his impatient temperament he had a soft heart for children, animals—anything weak, defenceless, frightened. He patted her shoulder and tightened his grasp.

"Look here, there isn't anything to be afraid of. It was only a dream."

She turned then, straining back against his arm so that she could look at him.

"Did you—dream it—too?"

"No. Look here, it's nothing—a dream's nothing—it can't hurt anyone—you're only got to wake up. Here's Bran telling you the same thing. He's most awfully upset about you."

Bran had his forepaws on the bed again. The tip of his tail moved deprecatingly. He pushed his head forward and blew warm puffs of air at her hand, her arm.

"Feeling better?" said Jervis. "What was it? Would you like to tell me?"

Leaning against his arm, and looking up at him with those un-naturally wide eyes, she said, "I thought—you were dead."

Her voice was the lost ghost of itself. He hardly heard the words; yet they reached him, releasing some emotion which he did not understand. He did not try to understand it, but it reinforced that odd tenderness.

"I thought—you were dead," said Nan.

"Do I feel as if I were dead?" His arm tightened about her.

"I saw you—in a dark place. You were—dead."

"Would you mind, Nan?" he asked softly. (Copyright, 1932, Applincoff)

Out of the darkness, tomorrow someone calls to Jervis Weare.

PASTOR REFUSES PORTLAND PULPIT

NEW YORK, Sept. 29.—(AP)—The Rev. Dr. Russell Brounger, for five years pastor of the Temple Baptist church in Brooklyn, has decided not to submit his name before the pul-

pit committee of the White Temple Baptist church, Portland, Ore., at their invitation, because he feels it is "God's will" that he remain in Brooklyn. "I feel that I can do the most good here," Rev. Mr. Brounger said today. Dr. Brounger said he had been invited to submit his name to the Oregon church's pulpit committee last August. Juntura.—Road from Peach to Juntura nearing completion.

EYE PAVING BID ON GREEN CREEK

PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 29.—(AP)—Chief Highway Engineer Baldock reported to the state highway commission here today the cost of building

the proposed Wilson river road from Tillamook to Forest Grove, including pavement, will be \$3,985,850, and that the cost with an old Macadam surface will be \$2,914,450. The commission opened bids on 12 projects. Included among bids was: Josephine county: Paving Green Creek-Jackson county line section of Pacific highway, 2.06 miles. Dunn and Baker, Klamath Falls, \$59,338. Oregon City—Bids to be opened October 19 for construction of \$115,000 postoffice.

'DEAD BALL' CHANGE IN GRIDIRON RULES

CHICAGO, Sept. 29.—(AP)—A petition by western conference football coaches for two exceptions to the new "dead ball" rule has been turned down by the national rules committee.

Chairman E. K. Hall has informed A. A. Stagg, of the University of Chicago, that special dispensation for a man touching a hand or knee to the ground in the mechanical execution of such a play as Michigan's famous "old 83," could not be allowed this season, in order to give the new rule a thorough test. A request that a zone ruling, to apply when a player, in the clear, trips and falls was rejected on the ground that application of such an exception would be difficult to call satisfactorily.

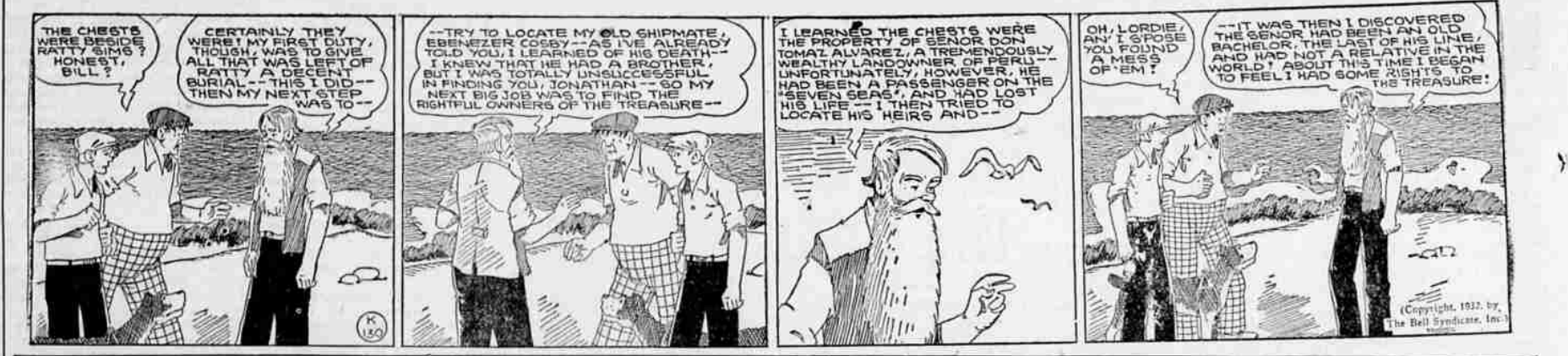
TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Boys Are "Wanted" In Miami!



By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORRESTER

BOUND TO WIN—The Treasure Is Safe!

By EDWIN ALGER



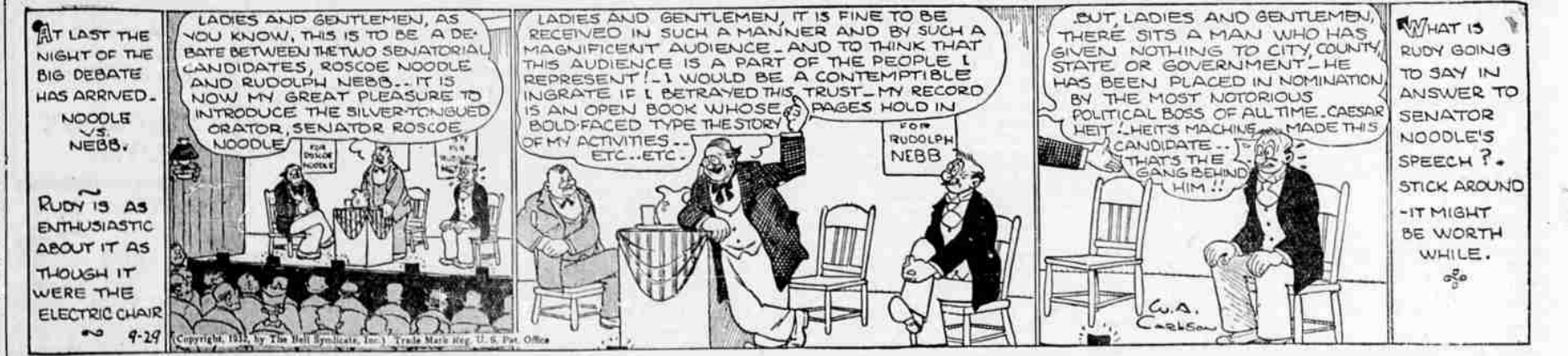
'SMATTER POP—Some Sigh

By C. M. PAYNE



THE NEBBS—And In This Corner

By SOL HESS



MUTT AND JEFF—Time Means Nothing To Jeff

By BUD FISHER



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



BROWNSVILLE FIRE DAMAGE HEAVY

ALBANY, Ore., Sept. 29.—(AP)—Five business buildings in Brownsville were destroyed and several others were damaged by fire early today. Authorities estimated the total loss at about \$100,000. The fire was believed to have started in the rear of a dry goods store. It swept through a barber shop, drug store, an unoccupied building and the postoffice before it was checked by the brick wall of a bakery. The building formerly occupied by the town's only bank, which closed recently, was badly damaged. Brownsville is one of the oldest towns in the Willamette valley. When needing duplicating sales books, flat-packs or fan-fold cash register forms, ledger sheets for bookkeeping machines or any other kind of printing, don't order from out-of-town firms and pay more. Phone 75 and one of our representatives will call.

NO TRESPASS SIGNS AT PHEASANT FARM

The Jackson County Game Protective association, in accordance with an agreement with the game commission, has posted 125 no trespassing signs at the location of this year's pheasant farm in the field owned by W. H. Gore, west of the Owen-Oregon Lumber company. This action was taken to protect the immature pheasants, remaining in this enclosure, and to provide a sanctuary for the birds, which will fly in from other fields during the season. This area will also be regularly patrolled by the state police and the cooperation of all local sportsmen is asked during the hunting season, which will open October 15, in protecting the pheasants in this particular location. Desirable houses always in first class condition for rent, lease or sale. Call 105.