

Nothing Venture

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Ferdinand Francis, Nan Weare's only child in solving the mystery of her husband's disappearance, dashes off to New York to trace a pair of men, one answering Jervis' description. Nan is left alone of the Weare country estate to face the fact that Rosemund Carson and Robert Leonard, whom she suspects of kidnapping Jervis, both have alibis.

Chapter 41
MRS. MELLISH AGAIN
MRS. MELLISH came into the library. Nobody would have known that she had been cooking. She wore her black afternoon dress, with a medallion brooch depicting a pink church leaning a little sideways against a background of bright blue sky. She had an air of dignity and leisurely calm as she came to a standstill at a respectful distance and waited for Nan to speak.

"Please sit down," said Nan. "I'd rather stand, ma'am." "Did she do it on purpose? Did she know how difficult it was to talk to someone who stands literally, as well as morally, on her dignity?" Nan braced herself. "I'd like you to sit, Mrs. Mellish." She indicated a chair near her own. After a momentary hesitation Mrs. Mellish advanced another chair—one without arms and straight in the back. Upon the extreme edge of this chair she seated herself, her body stiffly erect, and her hands neatly folded. After a suitable pause she said:

"Yes, ma'am!" Nan leaned forward. "I want you to help me." Mrs. Mellish registered a blank inability to understand how she could possibly be of any assistance to Mrs. Weare. After a further pause she again said: "Yes, ma'am!" "We're in great trouble about Mr. Weare," said Nan. Mrs. Mellish said "Yes, ma'am" for the third time. Nan got up abruptly. If she were to sit still and listen to Mrs. Mellish saying "Yes, ma'am" anything might happen. She felt a passionate desire to pick up the nearest book and send it crashing through the window, or, better still, straight at Mrs. Mellish's head.

She let the curtain fall and turned round again. "You've known Jervis a long time." "Yes, ma'am." "You knew him when he was a little boy." "Yes, ma'am." "You've known him all those years. We're in dreadful trouble about him—we think—that something—must have happened." "Yes, ma'am!" said Mrs. Mellish. There was a little heavy brass box on the telephone-table; it was used to hold stamps. Nan wrenched her eyes away from it. She wanted to pick it up and throw it at Mrs. Mellish—hard. With an effort, she stood where she was. "Do you know of anything that might have taken him away suddenly?" Mrs. Mellish considered this in silence. She had been brought up to tell the truth, and classed lying with dirt, unpunctuality, gossip, and communism. There were worse sins, such as stealing, atheism, and immorality; but they hardly came within the purview of the respectable. After a suitable pause she compromised by saying: "I can't say that I do."

"You'd tell me if you did—wouldn't you? Mr. Francis has gone to New York to make inquiries there, but—I don't feel as if Jervis had gone to New York."

Nan turned away and walked to the end of the room and back again. Mrs. Mellish never moved at all. She was sitting there because she had been ordered to sit; otherwise, she would have risen when Mrs. Weare had risen; but, having been ordered to sit, sit she would until she was ordered to rise. A stubborn sense of her own superiority upheld her. She knew her place. If Mrs. Weare didn't know her place, she looked up and saw Nan standing over her. "Mrs. Mellish—you know something. What is it?" Mrs. Mellish reinforced her dignity. This wasn't any way for a mistress to behave, and she didn't hold with it. "You know something—"

"Yes, you do!" The urgency of the tone melted into appeal. "Oh, won't you tell me?"

Mrs. Mellish sat up a little more stiffly. "If I may put the question, ma'am—what makes you think as I have anything to tell?"

"You have—haven't you? I want you to tell me what it is. It may not seem an important thing to you—it may even seem a very, very little thing—and you may have some reason for not wanting to tell me; but won't you please put all that on one side and just tell me what it is? We've got nothing to go on, and it's like being shut up in a pitch dark room—even the least glimmer of light might show us where the door is. Don't you see that?"

There was another pause, and Mrs. Mellish said, "No, ma'am."

The tears rushed into Nan's eyes. They were so hot with anger that they burned there. She stepped back because the impulse to take Mrs. Mellish by those plump cushioned shoulders and shake her until her eyes bulged and her teeth rattled was simply overpowering. After a moment she said, "You do know something—I know that you do! Why won't you tell me what you know?"

The subtle air of offense which had accompanied Mrs. Mellish to this interview became more noticeable. It wasn't for anyone that knew her manners to color up and behave hysterical like Mrs. Weare was doing. Mrs. Mellish thanked Providence she was not as other women were. She thanked Providence that she had been brought up respectable. At her husband's funeral she had shed a widow's decorous tears, but she had been careful not to let them spoil her craps. She despised Nan a good deal for her changing color and the quiver in her voice. She did not speak.

Nan went back to her chair and sat down. It was no good appealing to Mrs. Mellish. She knew very well that she was being despised, and the Forsyth pride stiffened her back. She allowed the silence to lengthen. Then she said, in a voice which Mrs. Mellish had not heard before, "I'm waiting."

"I beg your pardon, ma'am?" "I'm waiting for you to tell me what you saw or heard on Tuesday night." Nan's voice had no quiver in it now. It was hard with authority.

Mrs. Mellish looked up, a little surprised, and met steady eyes with something behind them that demanded an answer. The change flurried her a little. Unconsidered words sprang to her lips. "Nothing that was to say anything, ma'am."

"Then you did see something?" Mrs. Mellish recovered herself. "I couldn't say, ma'am."

"I think you must say," Mrs. Mellish bridled. "I'm sure I'm the last to keep back anything as would be any help," she said. With the fingers of one hand she plected a fold of the white linen handkerchief on her knee.

"Yes, what did you see?" "I'm a poor sleeper," said Mrs. Mellish, "and when I don't sleep, it's my habit to make myself a cup of tea."

"Yes!" said Nan. "I'd run out of tea," said Mrs. Mellish. "I make so bold as to keep some handy—I've a caddy that was given me by Mr. Weare for the purpose. Tuesday night, my caddy was empty, and I went down to fill it. It might have been three o'clock or thereabouts."

"Yes!" said Nan. "Go on, please." Mrs. Mellish meant to take her own time. "I went down the back stairs, and so I come up, I had my candle in my hand, and when I come up to the second floor, the door through to the landing was half open. I put my hand on it to bring it to, and I heard a door open along the corridor."

"Yes!" said Nan. "What door was it?" "It was Mr. Jervis' door—Mr. Weare, I should say—so I blew out my candle, it being an awkward time of night to meet a gentleman, and me in my dressing gown."

"Yes!" said Nan rather breathlessly. (Copyright, 1932, Lippincott)

Mrs. Mellish, tomorrow, at last tells whom she saw in Jervis' room.

COOLIDGE GROUP EYES RAIL ILLS

NEW YORK, Oct. 8.—(AP)—The Coolidge non-partisan railway commission today held its organization

meeting after which former President Calvin Coolidge said the committee would "take up and study the question of transportation." "This is the national transportation committee formed for the purpose of studying the problems of transportation," he announced. "The committee has met this morning, organized and engaged quarters and will take up and study the question of transportation for the purpose of making a report in about three months."

PRISONERS TAKEN TO WORLD SERIES

EL DORA, Ia., Oct. 8.—(AP)—A charge that Warden C. H. Ireland of the state reformatory at Anamosa took two prisoners to the world series baseball games between the Chicago

Cubs and New York Yankees, was made by Clyde L. Herring, Democratic candidate for governor. He made the charge in a political address last night in which he called upon Gov. Dan Turner to remove the warden from office. Replying to Herring's statements, the warden said at Anamosa that he was accompanied on a trip to Chicago by Harry Horton and Walter Wakefield, both "trustees," but that the trip was "made without one cent of expense to the state."

POLK MOSQUITOES CARRY MALARIA

PORTLAND, Oct. 8.—(AP)—Somewhere in Polk county, near Independence, malaria-carrying mosquitoes are at work, with the result that six cases of the disease have been reported.

This information has been received by Dr. John Ables, city health officer here. The patients suffering from the ailment were employed in a hopyard near Independence and contracted the disease about the same time. "Malaria is not common in Oregon," Dr. Ables said, "and it has undoubtedly made its appearance by importation. Some sufferer has entered the state, been bitten by a mosquito that carried the ailment, and it has been passed on to others."

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Last Minute Entry



By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

BOUND TO WIN—A New Surprise!



By EDWIN ALGER

S'MATTER POP—A Little Matter Of Transplanting



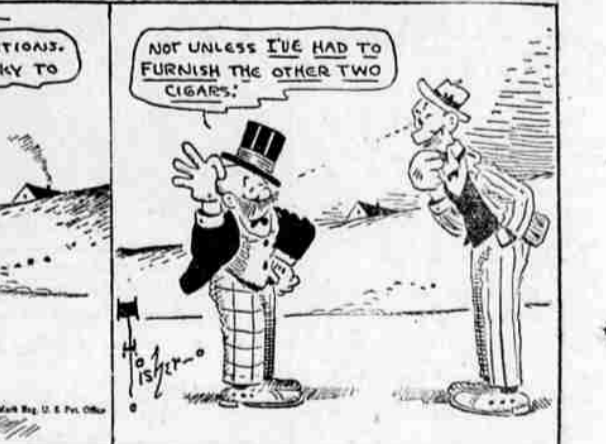
By C. M. PAYNE

THE NEBBS—The Question



By SOL HESS

MUTT AND JEFF—A Snappy Answer By Jeff



By BUD FISHER

BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManur

DEATH LURKS IN SECRET FORMULA

PORTLAND, Ore., Oct. 8.—(AP)—Dennis P. McCarthy, 46, was sought on a district court warrant today on the complaint of L. A. Orth of Portland that he had paid McCarthy \$300 for a "secret formula" supposed to produce synthetic tungsten metal but that the chemicals when mixed, produced a gas so deadly that one inhalation would be sufficient to cause death. Orth said McCarthy offered to sell him the formula in order to raise money for other purposes. Orth took the formula to a chemist, who mixed it according to directions. The chemist reported that the resultant fumes were particularly deadly and one breath would kill. Orth took his case to the police.

Parke Davis Vanilla Extract, makes good things taste better; 3 ounces \$3.50; 8 oz. \$5.00; pint \$11.19. Heath's Drug Store. Fender and body repairing. Prices right, Shell Sheet Metal Works.

AUTOIST KILLED ON MERLIN ROAD

GRANTS PASS, Ore., Oct. 8.—(AP)—E. C. Gray, 64, was killed, and his daughter, Mrs. E. M. Taylor, 31, was seriously injured on the Merlin road near here late yesterday when their automobile hit a rough spot on the road, went out of control and overturned several times. Gray's widow and six children survive. George Levy of Roseburg brought the injured woman to a hospital.

Coos Bay Pleads For Deep Channel
MARSHFIELD, Ore., Oct. 8.—(AP)—A telegram appealing from the recent decision of army engineers, and asking for a 24-foot channel for Coos bay was sent to the war department today by commissioners of the Port of Coos Bay. The commissioners previously had asked for a 26-foot channel the entire length but today's recommendation was for a 24-foot outer harbor and a 26-foot depth on the inner bay.