

# VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren

**SYNOPSIS:** Intrigue follows intrigue in the Citadel of Mekkasen, and the only sane commandant Margaret Maligni has found since her husband Jules has abandoned her to the advances of Raisul, is Colonel Le Sage of the French Secret Service. He promises to take her away with him when his curious leaves Mekkasen; but before that can be Major Napoleon, Rook of the Foreign Legion, Raisul, son of the Kaid of Mekkasen, Jules and Pedro Maligni, the Kaid himself—someone will bring his plot out into the open. And what wonders Margaret, will be her position then!

Chapter 39  
**AN AMBUSH**  
"AND not too hard, my excellent King of Beasts," cautioned Raisul, "or I'll have your tongue torn out by the roots. Also you shall have a hundred strokes, very much too hard."

"And not too light, either," he continued, "or your stomach shall be so light for a month or two, that you'll never get over it. You'll be Ibrahim the Skeleton, instead of Ibrahim the Lion, by the time I've done with you."

"So just hard enough. Just hard enough to lay him out while we truss him up. Understand?"

Ibrahim the Lion grinned and shook the hard-wood stick which the Moroccan Arab uses with such skill, whether as a cudgel or a missile.

"Yes, Sidi," he laughed, showing a huge mouthful of great shining teeth. "Watch me."

"I shall watch you, all right," Raisul assured him. "Get behind that curtain. The swine will sit just there, right in front of it."

When I yawn loudly and say 'In shallah'—strike—and don't bungle your job if you want to raise a family."

A few minutes later, Raisul's personal bodyguard entered the room, followed by a soldier of the Legion.

"Sir Otho Robert Mandeville-Bellême, I think," Raisul said, with a pleasant welcoming smile.

"The legionnaire Otho Bellême, smiled Otho in reply.

"I wonder if you remember me?" continued Raisul, "or whether this Moorish dress..."

"Aren't you the 'Mr. Russell' who used to visit Jules Maligni at Oxford?" asked Otho. "Yes, I remember you. Now the Sidi Kaid ben Abd'allah Karim of Mekkasen."

"Ah—we have both changed our names slightly—as well as our clothes," observed Raisul. "Won't you sit down?" and he indicated the low-cushioned divan that stood before the heavy silken curtain.

"Will you have coffee—or something a little more interesting?"

"Oh, coffee, thanks," replied Otho quickly, with scarcely formulated, and instantly rejected, suspicion.

Raisul seated himself comfortably among his cushions, lighted a cigarette and blew a smoke-ring. "Yes," he said musingly, "Oxford... I remember a certain luncheon party. It was there I first saw Jules' future wife."

"Yes, I remember. A Yelverbury luncheon-party," replied Otho quietly.

"Queer little small world, isn't it, with its changes and chances. And how we've all changed!"

"Margaret Maykings is Margaret Maligni. Sir Otho Robert Mandeville-Bellême is the legionnaire Otho Bellême. Maligni the Magnificent, as you used to call him at Oxford, is not quite so magnificent as he was—and 'Mr. Russell,' now on his native heath is, as you observed, the Sidi Kaid Raisul ben Abd'allah Karim of Mekkasen."

"Yes, interesting," agreed Otho.

"Oh, very. Very interesting—and amusing. 'Mr. Russell' wasn't of very much importance at that party, and neither Margaret nor anybody else had a word to throw at him. And now he holds you in the hollow of his hand."

And extending a delicate but powerful hand, palm upward, the speaker suddenly clenched it till the knuckles stood white through the olive-tinted skin.

"Really?" observed Otho, nicking ash from his cigarette.

"Oh, very really," asserted Raisul. "In the hollow of my hand."

"Oh, how's that?" inquired Otho.

"Why—the luncheon-party is now a country-house party—as regards four of its members, anyhow. You and I, my dear Bellême, and Maligni the Magnificent and Margaret, his wife. All together again in my nice country-house in Mekkasen."

"What!" ejaculated Otho, suddenly sitting bolt upright. "Margaret here? Here, in Mekkasen?"

"Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Maligni are honeymooning here—in the castle." Otho's heart beat fast.

Was it possible that he was at this very moment close to Margaret? Was it possible that he was about to see her again? What should he say to her? What would she say to him? He knew by heart the letter which she had written him from Gibraltar and he had received at Mellerat. It had ended:

"We are crossing to Tangier next week for a holiday in Morocco, ending up with a visit to a real live Kaid whom Jules knows well. I can't tell you how thrilled I am."

"I say, 'Tho, we shall both be in North Africa.' Wouldn't it be lovely if we could all meet?"

"Anyhow, do write to me, care The Secretary, Cosmopolitan Club, Tangier."

"With lots of love, 'Tho dear, Margaret."

And then the heart-warming, treasured postscript.

"Oh, Otho, you are the dearest friend I ever had."

"By Jove," he said, with something of the impetuosity of which life had, even yet, not wholly cured him. "I should love to see her again."

"You shall," replied Raisul. And yawning loudly he added, "Inshallah! Which means, as you know, 'If God wills'..."

And Ibrahim the Lion struck.

When Otho recovered consciousness, and tried to move, he found that he could move nothing but his eyes. Nor did he keep his eyes open for more than a few seconds, as the pain that he suffered was intolerable and the vision that he beheld, unendurable.

Was he again sun-stricken in the desert, and beholding a maddening mirage? For he had seemed to see Margaret herself, standing between her husband, Jules Maligni, and that fellow, Raisul. Yes, each was holding one of her arms and she was struggling violently.

Margaret struggling violently? Then she needed help. He must help her. He must spring up and rescue her. He'd break their damned necks.

But Bellême could not get up... And Bellême could not speak, for he was gagged.

And Bellême could not do any thing for he was bound. What the devil had happened?

Damn the blood. It had glued his eyelids together while he had kept them shut. With a great and painful effort Otho turned his head and crushed his face against a cushion. He moved his head again, and contrived to open the eye and again turn his face to the room.

Three men, Raisul, the servant who had brought the coffee, and a great grinning giant, Hercules himself.

But hadn't he just seen Margaret and Jules Maligni?

Was it a nightmare after all? When Otho again recovered complete consciousness, he realized that he was lying on the floor of the punishment cell, thoughtfully provided as an adjunct to the barrack quarters allotted to the section.

He sat up, thereby causing an acute pain to shoot through his head, and a wave of nausea to engulf him.

Why on earth was he doing coil punishment?

Slowly his mind cleared, and memory began to work accurately. Ginglyri, he felt his head.

Yes, by Jove! A lump and a cut. But he could have sworn that Raisul had sat there in front of him, and never moved. Obviously then, he had been attacked from behind.

Nice lad, Raisul.

And had he really seen Margaret? In a brief moment between waxing and waning consciousness?

Of course he had.

He could remember how she was dressed—a plain white silk frock, bare arms, a scarlet belt. And Raisul and Jules Maligni were each holding one of her arms. Curse and blast them.

Obviously he had been decoyed to Raisul's quarters by the messenger who had brought him the note—there to be knocked out and trussed up, with a view to exhibiting him, in that condition, to Margaret.

Why?

After Margaret had seen him, she had been taken away again, presumably by force. There had been four men there for the job—and one of them her precious husband, and who was obviously in the game, whatever it was.

Then, apparently, the gang had turned their attention to himself, and while he was still unconscious had dropped him here.

Again why?

A new terror comes to Margaret, tomorrow.

## HOLMAN WILLING IF LAW PERMITS

SAN FRANCISCO, March 25.—(AP)—Rufus C. Holman, Oregon state treasurer, said here today the action of a state employe in seeking the authority of the state supreme court for payment of warrants or to provide for their endorsement so they may bear interest was an "excellent move."

"It is entirely as I had expected," he asserted upon his arrival this morning from Portland on the S. S. Admiral Peoples.

C. D. Thomas, state employe, filed petition for a writ of mandamus before the Oregon supreme court yesterday. "I am perfectly willing and happy to disburse the public funds according to law," Holman said. "And I am obliged to do so. But first I must know what the laws are."

## RENTAL LANDLORDS TO MEET THURSDAY

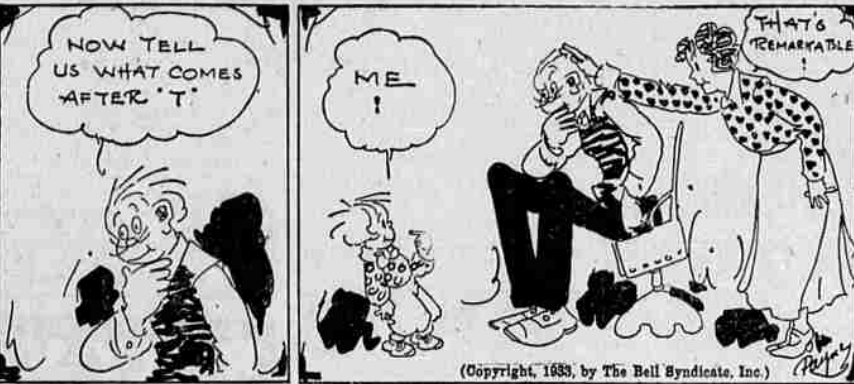
Rental property owners meeting scheduled for Friday evening had to be postponed on account of the Chamber of Commerce meeting which created a conflict.

About 25 owners assembled and a general discussion of rental problems ensued. The general consensus among rental owners is that they can no longer keep the unemployed in their houses as they are strictly up against it themselves, and can no longer afford to pay water, etc.

Use of the court house auditorium has been secured for Thursday evening, March 30th, when they hope there will be no conflicts and interested parties can attend. Broken windows glazed by Frowbridge Cabinet Works. Real estate or insurance—Leave it to Jones. Phone 766

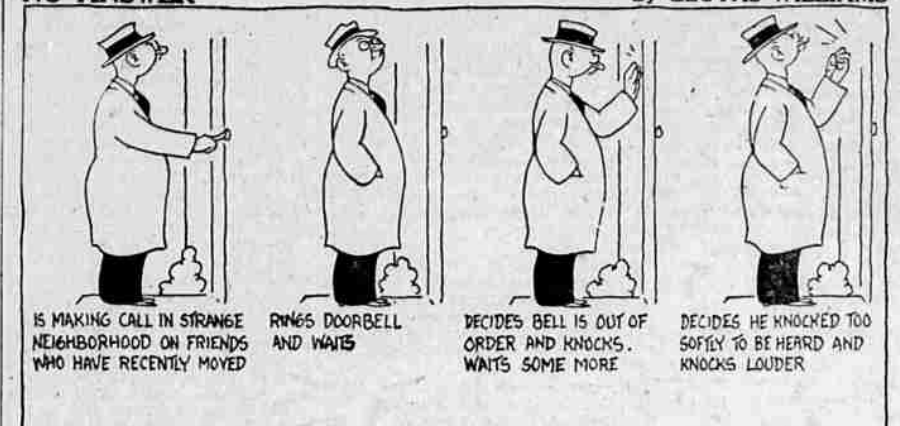
## 'SMATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



## NO ANSWER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Uneven Battle

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



## BOUND TO WIN—Ben's Adventure Begins!

By EDWIN ALGER



## THE NEBBES—Little, But Oh My!

By SOL HESS



## BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



## DOUGLAS CO. NEEDY GET TASTE OF DEER

ROSEBURG, Ore., March 25.—(AP)—Fifty families in Douglas county are dining on venison this week. The state game commission has issued an order permitting venison confiscated by state policemen in game violation cases, to be used for distribution to the needy and the meat is being distributed by Miss Agnes Pitchford, county police matron, representing the county court.

Desirable houses always in first-class condition for rent, lease or sale. Call 108.

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