VALIANT DUST

by Percival Christopher Wren (Author of "BEAU GESTE")

SYNOPSIS: The welter of intrigue against France in the Citadel of Mekazzen suddenly ends in death for the Kaid of Mekazzen, and capture for the traitorous Major Riccoli of the Foreign Legion. Raisul, son of the Kaid, flings Jules Maligni, who had betrayed him, from a high balcony to death below. Colonel Le Sage of the French Secret service arrives at the balcony only to find a rope dangling from it. Otho Bellême is sent down the rope to find Raisul. Meanwhile, Margaret Maligni, Jules' English wife, is wakened by a wild cry.

Chapter 47

A TERRIBLE THREA'

WHAT was that?

Margaret sprang up.

No doubt of it, this time! A cry and then a crash. No, a clatter. Still sounding in her ears.

The cup! Someone had sent it rolling, bumping and clattering across the stone floor.

Merciful Heaven, help! There was a man—standing on the coping of the balcony—clearly silhouetted against the moonlight and the luminous sky.

He was hanging on a rope—or holding to it, as he stood on the balcony ledge—and he had kicked the tin cup into the room as he sought foothold.

Had she not gone and drunk water, and left the cup there in the middle of the coping—he would have got into the room in perfect silence, and found her there asleep.

Well—now he had found her awake. Thank God for the pistol.

But she couldn't shoot the man in cold blood, without a word. Yet if she waited much longer, her hand certainly would begin to shake.

Could he see her now? Why didn't he move? Of course, he was listening, peering. Should she fire, or speak?

She would fire.

Heavens, no! It might not be Raisul. And if it were Raisul—and she killed him—what would happ n to them all, as soon as the Kaid knew? Things unthinkable.

The man stooped and stepped down into the balcony.

"Well?" said Margaret quietly, and turned up the lamp.

"Good evening, my dear. One would almost have thought that you were expecting me. Well, you will be expecting me, after tonight, though I shan't have to come down a rope."

"Stop! Stand still," cried Margaret.

"Good Heavens! A real pistol! What a desperate young woman! Now I wonder where on earth you got that thing. And I wonder whether it's loaded. And I wonder whether you can use it."

"Stop!" cried Margaret again. "Stand still. If you cross that mat, I'll shoot you."

Raisul laughed.

"Well, well," he grinned, and suddenly sobered.

"Love me, Margaret, have me. I will make you happy. I swear it by the Ninety and Nine sacred names of Allah. Love? What do these Christian dogs know of love?"

And Raisul deliberately stepped into the middle of the mat, just as Margaret perforce lowered her ·hing arm.

"Shoot, Margaret!" he said, and spread his arms wide, exposing his breast.

Margaret raised the pistol.

"Shoot, Margaret!" he repeated, standing steady as a rock, smiling unflinchingly.

What should she do? He was edging nearer. Why didn't she shoot him as he stood there smiling at her? But how could she kill him—when only too well she knew the terrible consequences.

"Shoot Margaret!" invited Raisul for the third time. "Let me die ·ere at your feet. For how can man die better?"

And Raisul took another step towards the bed.

"Please don't make me kill you, Raisul," Margaret said. "Have you no decency at all? You shan't die on the praying-carpet. But I swear to God you shall die if you step off it. If you move another inch I shall be justified in firing in self-defence."

"You won't be kind?"

"Go, will you?"

"All right, Margaret, all right, I'll go. And when I come back, it will be with his blood on my hands—on my hands and on your head, Margaret."

"What do you mean?" whispered Margaret, and again, perforce, she lowered the pistol, that he might not see how she trembled.

"Ah! What do I mean? Do you know, I hardly like to tell you exactly what I mean. Anyhow it will be 'something with boiling oil in it.' But I tell you this—either I'll have his lips or yours. Do you get the point? Either I have your lips with mine, or I'll have his lips with a knife. That'll spoil his beauty, won't it, Margaret. That's what I tell you, Margaret, and I think you know whether I am a man who keeps all his promises—when they are threats."

Neither of them had yet mentioned a name.

Margaret had shrunk back in horror.

"Yes, I know. All very horrid. Look here, Margaret, love me, and he can go. I'll see him safe out of the country, out of the Legion, and back to England.

"Mind you, I've got you, and I'm going to keep you, and things will be so much pleasanter—especially for you—if you'll be sensible as well as kind—and surely life would be better for you, Margaret, as my wife than as my . . ."

"I have one husband already."

"That's where you're wrong, Margaret. That was another part of my errand of mercy—to tell you that Jules has met with a little accident."

"Jules? An accident?"

"Yes, and to offer the appropriate condolences or congratulations. In fact, I might have shouted in the window, 'Is the Widow Maligni at home?'"

Suddenly Margaret sat down.

"Yes, the poor Jules is no longer with us, and Otho Bellême will be with us no longer—if I go now, Margaret."

Would this devil mutilate, torture and murder Otho?

"Raisul," she said. "Is there any oath that you would keep?"

"Oh yes, especially to you, Margaret. Yes . . . there's an oath I'd keep."

"Then listen. Will you swear that oath to me? That if I do not give myself to you—you intend to torture and to kill Otho Bellême?"

"With the greatest pleasure, and absolute sincerity."

"I believe you."

That settled it. If Jules were dead, he could not suffer punishment. Pedro Maligni and his wife must look out for themselves, as they had done all these years. For herself—well, never mind herself. She could, and she would, save Otho. She had spoilt his life with her folly, she'd save it now with her poor courage.

Margaret raised the pistol. Straight at Raisul's face.

For Otho . . .

Bang! . . .

"Y'Allah! That was close. You pulled to the right. But you've blinded me. Maragaret.

"Blind for life," groaned Raisul.

Raisul raised both arms, drew his silken scarf across his face—and then suddenly, sprang like a panther.

Bang!

Too late.

Bang!

What was the use? He was breaking her wrist. But the noise might bring help.

Bang! Bang!

The pistol! He had it.

She was flung violently upon the bed, and the pistol fell clattering in the most distant corner of the room.

The knife.

Fool that she had been. Why had she not kept the dagger in her left hand? Under the pillow.

The man was as strong as a lion . . .

Both her wrists . . .

His whole weight . . .

She could not move . . .

His foul lips . . .

Oh God, she must not faint.

What was he saying? . . .

"Do you hear, Margaret, do you hear? Listen to that oath again, the oath that I have never broken the oath that I will never break. Did you hear it?

"And he can thank his God that your first shot missed me, for nothing on earth could have saved your damned Otho Bellême—or you—if I had died here. No one, and nothing, can save him but me."

And suddenly Margaret realized that it was so.

Otho!

She herself had all but caused his death—for Raisul's death meant Otho's death. For once Raisul was speaking the truth.

"Raisul," she said. "You swore that if I did not give myself to you, Otho should die. Do you swear by that same oath that he shall live and go free, if I . . ."

"Margaret, I swear."

Otho's life. Unspeakable tortures . . .

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There is a terrific battle, tomorrow, for Margaret's honor.

MINISTER FREED ON GIRL' SCHARGE

MUNCIE, Ind., April 4.—(AP)—Freed by a circuit court jury of a charge of attempting to assault an 18-year-old Sunday school teacher, the Rev. G. Lemuel Conway today indicated he would appeal for reinstatement in his pulpit at the Madison street M. E. church here.

He was suspended for one year by a church jury which on March 16 convicted him of imprudent ministerial conduct.

Acquittal of the 51-year-old minister came less than three hours after the jury received the case late yesterday. Miss Helen Huffman, who testified the preacher made improper advances to her during an automobile ride last December 29, was not in the courtroom when the verdict was read last night.

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

MT. EVEREST CONQUERED FIRST TIME BY PLANE

BOMBAY, April 4. — (AP) — Mt. Everest, highest mountain in the world, was crossed by airplane today for the first time in history. The Marquis of Clydesdale, Lieutenant-Colonel Blacker and Flight Lieutenant McIntyre, three daring Englishmen, achieved their goal of flying over the formidable peak 29,141 feet above sea level.

To Talk Toll Road.

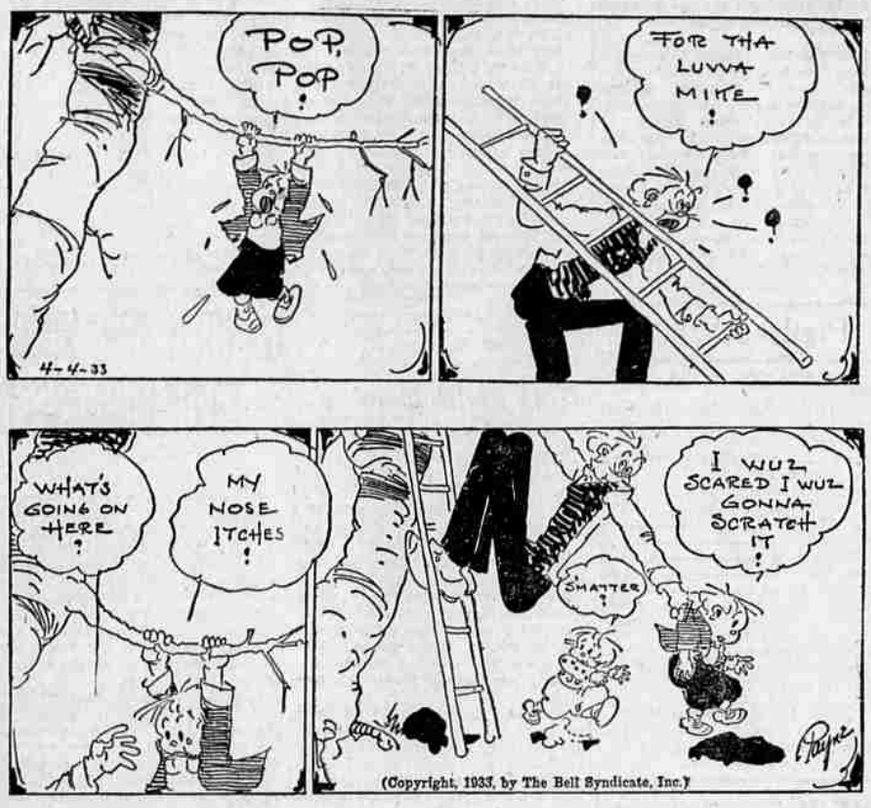
SALEM, April 4.—(AP)—Construction of the proposed Wilson river and Wolf creek roads as toll projects to be financed by the reconstruction finance corporation, will be discussed here Thursday.

REFORESTATION CHIEF NAMED BY ROOSEVELT

WASHINGTON, April 4.—(AP)—President Roosevelt today selected Robert Fencher of Massachusetts as director of unemployment to supervise the reforestration program.

8x10 Photo for 75c. The Peasleys, opp. Holly Theater.

S'MATTER POP— By C. M. PAYNE



SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Treasure Map!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

BOUND TO WIN—The Discovery!

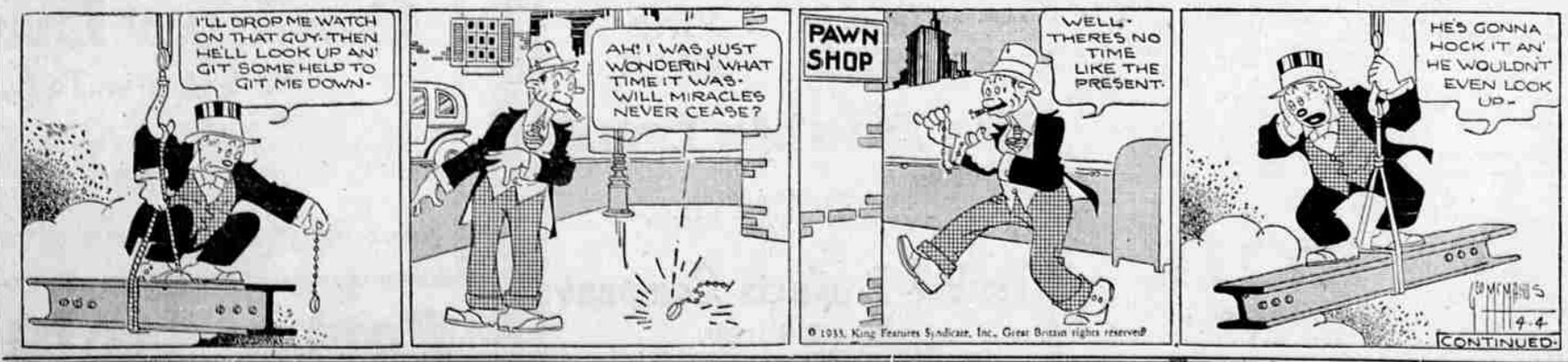
By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—You Tell Them

By SOL HESS

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



Oregon Weather.

Fair tonight with frosts west portion and freezing temperature east portion; Wednesday fair and warmer; gentle changeable winds offshore.

Fender and body repairing. Prices right. Brill Sheet Metal Works.

DALLAS, April 4.—(AP)—Funeral services were to be held this afternoon for John G. Brown, 84, of Dallas, eldest son of W. C. and Martha J. Brown, pioneers of 1847.

75c For an 8x10 photo. The Peasleys, opp. Holly Theater.

There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation