

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SYNOPSIS: James Sundson shares a large house in Astoria, Oregon, with a curious group of guests, and a depleted staff. He distrusts the manager, Lovachem, and is ill at ease with all the others—excepting an American girl named Tally. Suddenly he is awakened from a doze by Mrs. Tally's hysterical plea to be allowed to enter his room. He claims her learns she has just escaped an abductor who followed her into the hotel. She will not permit Sundson to give an alarm, but allows him to go for the key of her room, which she has left in the hotel office. Sundson bids his frightened guest to remain under cover until he returns.

Chapter 6 DRIPPING HANDS

THE corridors were still dimly lit. I glanced over the railing into the lounge as I went past, but it was a black well with a lightish strip along the floor from the faint light of the corridor back of me. I had no trouble getting down the stairs, for I could follow the railing, but when I had once crossed the twilight of the faintly lighted strip in the lounge I was in complete darkness.

Thus it took me some time to fumble about in the blackness for the electric light switches, and all the time the wind was rattling and shrieking in the court just outside. I couldn't find a match in my pockets, and although in hunting for the light switch my fingers encountered the keyboard, I couldn't, of course, tell which key was nineteen. I don't know just how long it was—several moments, at least—when I finally encountered the switch. Touching it threw the little lobby into a light that looked bright but probably wasn't. And even after that it took a moment or two to convince myself that not one of the keys hanging so trustingly on the board on the wall bore the number nineteen.

It and into the corridor, and then I could see it in the light from my own room.

It was a man. I did not know who he was. He was dead. I knew that at once. And it was a very ugly death, for he'd been stabbed. I remember saying to myself: "Don't touch anything, this is murder. Don't touch anything."

Then I was in my room. No one was there: She was gone. I was pressing the bell with my thumb, for he'd been stabbed. I remember saying to myself: "Don't touch anything, this is murder. Don't touch anything."

I was still pushing the bell and washing the dead man wouldn't stare so, and in the same moment cursing myself for being so shaken, when I heard the door away down at the beginning of the north corridor open. I stepped out into the hall, avoiding a hand which had fallen slowly outward.

Lovachem himself, fully dressed, wavered out of the gloom.

HE didn't ask me anything for a moment. He just fell on his fat knees and stared at the dead man.



Lovachem fell on his knees and stared.

Then he felt for a pulse and touched his face and leaned further over to see if there was any breath at all in that sprawled body. I stood watching him. Finally he leaned back and faced me. And it ever a man's face showed stark livid terror it was Lovachem's at that moment.

"Did you kill him?" Lovachem asked.

"My God, no."

He stared at me, dark eyes glittering from the sagging livid mask that was his face.

"Then what happened? He didn't kill himself?"

"I found him. There on the landing. I dragged him into the corridor and saw he was dead and rang."

He looked at me disbelievingly. Finally he lowered his eyes. He reached out a hand to the small ornamental hilt of the knife, drew his hand back as if it shrunk from touching the wetness about it, and then stretched it out again. The jewels winked evilly at me. I said:

"You'd better leave it alone, hadn't you? It seems to be murder. And the police won't want things touched."

His hand fell back, and his face, turned up to me, looked faintly green.

"The police. But the police—I am ruined. I am ruined! There's no need to call the police. I can't have gentlemen nosing about. I—"

He recalled that he was speaking aloud and to me and checked himself with a quick sidelong look at me.

"It's murder," I said. "You'll have to call the police."

His narrowed gaze measured me, tried to plumb my own eyes. Finally he said:

"I was thinking of the hotel. Anything like this is very bad for the place. Do you know the man?"

"I never saw him before."

"I don't know him either. I never saw him before. He certainly had no business in the hotel."

Sundson finds himself in unexpected danger, Monday.

I finally snapped out the light. The switch was near the door into the courtyard, and I glanced through the glass. The court was still black with flying shadows, but there was a light—it was from the door of my own room. The door was open. The light streamed out.

And at that very instant a dark figure flashed across the light, was silhouetted for a fleeting moment against it and was gone. I caught only a glimpse of a dark figure, but I was sure it was Sue Tally's.

The door of the lobby was locked, but the key was in it, and I had unlocked and opened the door and was running across the courtyard. The wind took the breath out of my lungs, and my heart was pounding by the time I had reached the little winding stairway.

ONE step more to the door. I could see no one against the light streaming from the still open door into my room.

I took the step. There was something on the landing. I was stumbling. I was plunging down upon it. I was confused with it and couldn't extricate myself.

My hands were pushing against it and I was kneeling. I brought my hands up and tried to see them through the dim half light. They were wet, and I could barely see that they were darkly stained.

The next few moments are not very clear in my memory. I managed somehow to get the door open and the limp thing dragged through

high school band contest, to be held at University of Oregon.

Jefferson high of Portland will defend the class A trophy; Silverton, class B, and Hill Military Academy, the class C cup.

The contest will be held at McArthur Court. Other schools which will be represented include Salem, Medford, Eugene, La Grande, Klamath Falls, Grant of Portland, Albany, Corvallis, Marshfield, Irigon, Oregon City, West Lynn, Astacada, Beaverton, Seaside and St. Helens. Others are expected to enter before the lists are closed.

SCHOOL BONDS TO COMPETE FRIDAY

EUGENE, April 12—(AP)—The best high school bands in Oregon will meet here Friday and Saturday in the tenth annual Oregon state



LOOK FOR THE RED TAPE OPENER

PHOENIX TO SEE TALENT P-T-A PLAY

PHOENIX, Apr. 12—(Spl.)—The play, "All a Mistake," given by Talent P-T-A

A. at Talent, for the benefit of the school, will be given at the Phoenix grange hall Friday night, April 21st. This play met with great success when given in Talent.

The cast includes: George Richmond (a young army officer just out of service, who brings his bride to the home of his uncle) Everett Boone; Nellie Richmond, (his happy bride who finds herself positively

wretched), Opal McLarnan; Nellie Huntington, who tries to help the newlyweds and finds herself in trouble); Gene Dixon Nell, (the Irish maid who has her suspicions in regard to the lunatic asylum next door); Vera Montgomery; Cornelia (Nellie) Skinner, (Romantic old maid looking for her Romeo); Cordelia Boone; Freddy Lighthead, (finds it "deuced awkward, doncheknow."); Fred More;

Capt. Kinner, (a retired sea captain who is "soot" in his ways); Clarence Holdridge.

The play was directed by Harry Lowe. The proceeds will be turned over to the Phoenix grange treasury.

Don't extend credit to Mr. New Customer until you find out from the Southern Oregon Credit Bureau how he paid the other fellows.

CHURCH CLEANED BY PHOENIX LADIES AID

PHOENIX, April 12—(Spl.)—Ladies' Aid society met at the home of Mrs. M. F. Shuler, last Thursday for an all day meeting, with covered dish luncheon at noon. About 25 ladies attended. During the afternoon a business meeting was presided over by

Mrs. J. W. Watkins. Fifty of the some books of the church in which several pages were loose, were glued together again.

During the business meeting it was decided that all the ladies would meet at the church today and have a general cleaning of the building.

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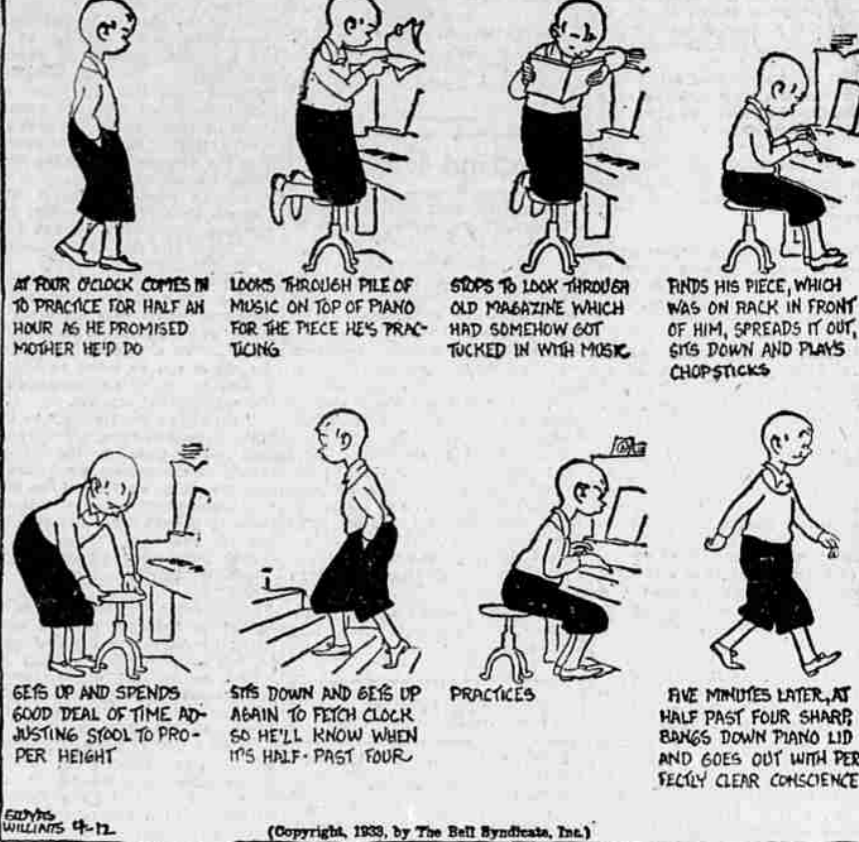
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



SNAPSHOTS OF A BOY PRACTICING

By GLUTAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Plays Historian For Skeeter

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Cornering The Counterfeiters!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Lost—One Mitten

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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