

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SUPPER: Sue Tally's fright-ful cry at the door of the French hotel room started Jim. Jim Sunday learned she had just escaped an abduction. When he went to the lobby for her key she disappeared and, returning, he stumbled over a murdered man in his corridor. Then he goes into the court to search for the murderer whom he suspects to be Lovschlem, manager of the hotel and is shot at five times. The murdered man seems to have been stabbed with the sword from the statue on a huge clock in the room of the French police demand that he hold himself ready for investigation. Just then there is a commotion down the hall. Furious, Sunday protests this and retreats.

Chapter 12 THE APPARITION

"Hi!" said Sue Tally. "Don't antagonize them." Voices and the commotion covered her whisper. They are inclined to look favorably upon you because you told of the clock sword, although one of them thinks it may have been a very clever ruse on your part to induce that very effect. But they are still doubtful. You must be careful. I know France better than you."

"... torn from my bed and dragged along icy corridors. I want an explanation of this remarkable conduct. Madame, what does this mean?"

The bundle of shawls was Mrs. Byng, and the cabbage proved to be a large lace cap, pulled over her hair, which had grown curiously knobby, and down to her thick black eyebrows. Her nose looked more than ordinarily bellicose, her voice dominated and drowned all other speech, and she was clearly in a frame of mind that brooked no liberties.

The dark little maid half strangled on a sob, Father Robert was a tall, noncommittal black clotheasin with a flaming red beard, and Mrs. Byng shouted: "In my night clothes. Tora from my bed in my night clothes. What are these men doing here?"

I wondered fleetingly whether she made it a habit to sleep in five or six brown woolen shawls and thought it possible, and Madame Lovschlem said sharply:

"It is the police, madame."

The young officer who spoke English was at her side, taking her by the arm. He turned her around facing the corridor, inexplicably she had failed to see the muddle that still lay there—perhaps her escaped escort had shielded it from her eyes. Now, however, the light fell strongly upon it.

Well, it was bad enough. I felt a little sick when I looked at it myself, and wondered why they didn't remove it. But it had a startling effect upon Mrs. Byng.

Suddenly she gave a choking shriek, turned, two long white fanned arms shot out from the shawls and clasped the commissaire tightly around the neck, and she collapsed on his reluctant chest.

I rather liked it. I had an idiotic desire to look at him sternly and say: "Ha! There will be inquiry investigations."

"You'd better get her to lie down," said Sue.

"Not on my bed!" I interjected, and Sue walked over to the shawls. Somehow they got Mrs. Byng into the corridor with Marcel and the young officer assisting her progress, and Madame Lovschlem and Sue bringing up the rear, and the little maid running for hot water, and Mrs. Byng herself emitting faint shrieks.

THE commissaire touched his forehead with his handkerchief, looked decidedly less pompous, and to me, at least, Mrs. Byng justified her existence, for he seemed in a sudden mood to cut the present inquiry short.

He asked the priest a number of short questions, to which Father Robert replied imperturbably and with apparent satisfaction to every one, and a small man in civilian clothes (a doctor evidently) appeared from somewhere and made a brief examination of the body. It was then removed, and before I could quite credit my good luck they were all leaving.

No, not quite all, for as I turned into my room with a sigh Marcel, who had appeared from somewhere while the others were leaving, rose from poking the fire.

"I will go now," he said. "Is there anything Monsieur wishes?"

"No, Marcel. Only sleep and the rest of the night in peace. But wait—who took the dagger from the dead man's chest and put it up there on the clock again?"

His shining black eyes were a bright impenetrable shield to the knowledge I know he must have.

"I do not know, monsieur," he said in his politest manner.

But as he reached the door he turned and looked soberly at me. "Monsieur," he said slowly, "is a brave but a very foolish man."

With which comforting reflection he left me alone.

Alone, I thought wearily, at last. I hoped most heartily there would be no more intruders. To make sure of it I went to the door. But Sue had been right; there was no key and no bolt. I moved the table against the door in such a manner that anyone trying to enter would immediately wake me.

I must have gone straight to sleep from very weariness. Once I woke with an immediate recollection of where I was and what had happened, and the impression that there was a sound like sobbing somewhere in that deserted wing. But I must have sunk back into sleep at once, for in the morning it was only a faint recollection.

The morning was cold and the wind was still blowing. I woke late, and when I rang for coffee and Marcel brought it I asked him what had been done.

"Nothing, monsieur," he said. He looked tired and hollow-eyed but his eyes were still excited. "The police were here again but have gone. They are making inquiry."

That was a curious day. Only Lovschlem was about when I went downstairs—Lovschlem and the white cockatoo. The cockatoo greeted me with a chuck and looked with interest at the cigarettes in my hand, and Lovschlem said good-morning unctuously and was I going for a walk. He made it clear at once that, to him at least, our somewhat strained relation of the previous night was a thing forgotten.

"A little fresh air," I said. "Is there any news?"

"There was, he said, no news. He looked bad in the clear morning light; dark and liverish; but he was still suave.

"Did you have a good sleep?" he asked too pleasantly and with an oily effect of rubbing his hands together which in actuality he was not doing at all, one hand being engaged in stroking the white neck of the cockatoo.

Pucci was watching my hand with his head on one side and appeared to be meditating as to the taste and biteable qualities of cigarettes. I drew my hand away and replied shortly and honestly that I had slept very well, upon which Lovschlem looked inconsistently disappointed.

"Americans," he said, forgetting for the moment his own claims, "are like the British. You are phlegmatic. You have no nerves. You would not believe how nervous I become. I did not sleep at all. I could not."

I thought but did not say that had consciences had been known to have that effect and walked out.

The little town was strange to me, but I did not feel like exploring it. Instead I followed the road to the bridge, walked half across it, found a spot sheltered from the wind and stood there, leaning against the water flowing below, or looking at the white, clean-swept old place, with its stretch of white wall that the Romans had built, and its close-huddled peaks and red roofs, and I smoked and tried to think out the grisly puzzle of the night.

After a while I walked some, but thoughtfully and without noting anything in particular, and it was not until about lunch time when I turned again into the hotel that I happened to look around and discover a blue-capped figure at a discreet distance. I did not know or care how long he had been following me, but I must say it gave me a rather chilly sensation up my spine.

and the edge of my appetite was a little dulled when I discovered that during my absence my room and my bags had been thoroughly searched, and that with no attempt at concealment, which could only mean the police.

I ate alone in the chilly dining room with Marcel serving me a really excellent lunch. Father Robert had apparently eaten early, for his table had been cleared. Mrs. Byng and Sue Tally did not appear.

I lingered for some time in a not unnatural wish to see her again. She played so large and important a part in the train of surmise and suggestion that had set itself going in my mind that I wanted very much to see her, and that in the cool and logical and unemotional light of day.

It was not, however, until toward evening that I saw her again, and then she was with David Lorn, and they were talking.

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Monday, David Lorn takes up his role in this sinister drama.

ADJUSTMENT OF FREIGHT SOUGHT

PORTLAND, April 19.—(AP)—Re-adjustment of freight rates on basic commodities upon what would approximate the pre-war level, as a means of stimulating business revival, was urged at a meeting here today of agricultural representatives of Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

Support was pledged to President Roosevelt's proposed program to eliminate "wasteful competition" among railroads.

Representatives of grain growers, livestock shippers and sales associations met with Arthur Geary, rate attorney, in response to a call of the interstate commerce commission for an investigation at Washington, D. C., April 24, to determine whether freight rates on basic commodities are excessive.

A further reduction on wheat and livestock rates of 25 per cent below that which the commission found

reasonable in previous decisions, was recommended by those attending the conference.

MAGAZINE FOUNDER, ORMOND SMITH, DIES

NEW YORK, April 19.—(AP)—Ormond Gerald Smith, 72, founder of a host of popular magazines and "dis-

coverer" of many noted writers, died suddenly last night of a stroke. Smith was president of the Street & Smith Publishing company. He founded such magazines as *Alfred's*, *Popular*, *People's*, *Smith's*, *Top Notch* and *Picture Play*.

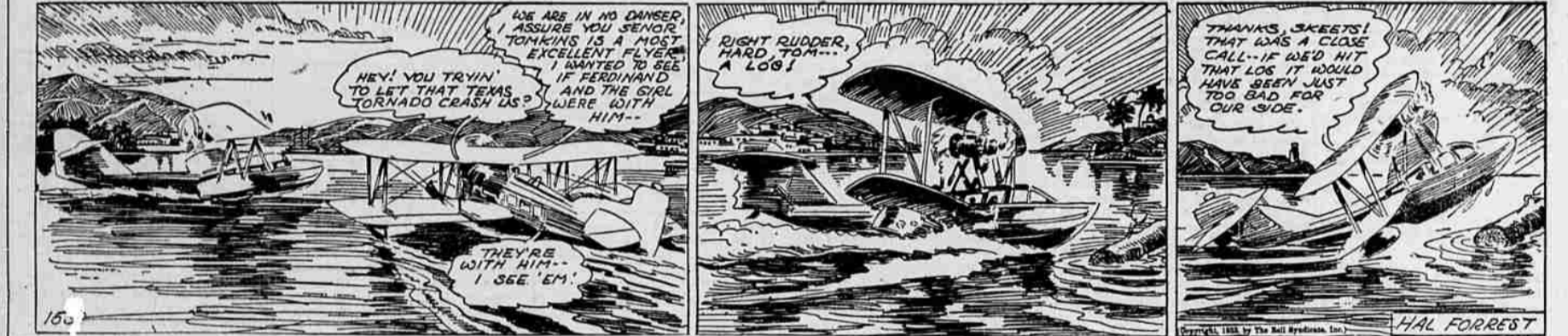
SHOE REPAIR SHOP moved from 41 S. Front to 122 N. Central. County shoe repairing, H. P. Precht.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Close Call!



BOUND TO WIN—Lotta Black Is Gone!



THE NEBBS—That's Something



BRINGING UP FATHER



Norton Upheld By High Court

SALEM, Ore., April 19.—(AP)—The county high school fund law, operative for many years in Lane county, was declared unconstitutional Tuesday for the Oregon supreme court.

The law, different from the new tuition law, arbitrarily set amounts paid to districts for educating non-school district students, the opinion stated, rather than apportioning the cost.

The lower court, in a decree by Judge H. D. Norton held the law unconstitutional. The opinion by Justice Harry Belt affirmed the decree.



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