

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SYNOPSIS: From a half dozen suspects who might have committed the murder, the French police pick Jim Sundeen. Sundeen not only is innocent, he was shot at five times by the murderer. But the inside of a cold French jail is a bad place to conduct a fight for freedom, and when David Lorn, a stranger, arrives with a note of introduction from Sue Tally, Sundeen is overjoyed. Lorn says the police have learned the murdered man was Russian and that Sundeen recently has been in Moscow.

Chapter 15 MR. LORN'S THEORY

WELL, two people can be in the same country without harm, can't they?"

"Why, don't you see, my friend, that there's an obvious connection? A connection, at least, in the eye of the police. And you can't blame them much; they've had some trouble with Communistic feuds lately."

"Oh, good God! It's— I was futile and raging at my futility. Of all the damned, dumb, astute—why, it's preposterous! It's stark raving crazy! It's—"

"No doubt," he said, watching me. "But that's what they think."

"You say you think there is something you don't do? What is it?"

"I don't know how it's going to come out. Don't expect too much. But I suggested that they hold a post-mortem."

"What do you mean?"

"I'm not sure I mean anything; I'm pinning my faith to the sixth bullet. Why wasn't it fired at you? Had it already been fired?"

"You mean—you think the fellow was not killed by stabbing? That he was shot?"

"Perhaps."

"But that's—why, that's out of the question, Lorn! The doctor and the police would see that at once. There'd be no possible way of hiding it."

"Only one. I've looked at the dagger: it's barely possible that it made a jagged wound. One that might conceal—"

"A bullet hole!" My private opinion was that the man was mad. His intentions might be good, but he was undoubtedly poor-witted. "Do you mean to say that it is possible that the murderer first shot the man through the heart and then—that's preposterous!"

"And then inserted the dagger exactly through the bullet hole. You look incredulous, Mr. Sundeen. But we may be dealing with an exceptional criminal. One never knows. The murderer may be one who calculates every chance; one of his advantages would be the fact that he is not in a city. Also all papers of identification were removed from the dead man. Thus, naturally, the pressure of effort to discover the murderer is not as great as it would be if the murdered man were known to be, for instance, a person of importance."

"It's great enough," I said bitterly. "Do you mean that the removal of his passport and papers and all would indicate that he was an important person?"

"That would be impossible to say."

"Are you a lawyer?"

"No," he said flatly, and then continued briefly: "I arrived this afternoon, early. Miss Tally told me of the murder and of the attempt to abduct her last night. She urged me to come to see you and insisted that I put forth every energy to assist you. Otherwise, I should not have thrust myself upon you in this manner."

"It's very good of you," I murmured, rather taken aback by his stateliness. "Very good, indeed."

He looked at his watch and picked up his hat and rose.

"The doctor should have arrived by this time, and I think I can manage to see something of the post-mortem. I shall return as soon as I discover the result."

I said some kind of thanks; the man in the corridor outside let Lorn out and locked the door again but left the light on.

ish a situation to endure for long. I hadn't murdered the man, and it was ridiculous to be cooped up in a French jail for something I hadn't done, and it couldn't last long.

And all the time I was arguing thus to myself the words "circumstantial evidence" were repeating themselves coldly in the back of my mind. And I wanted to be out of jail.

In an hour or so the warden brought me a tray with a very sparse meal on it. I was still looking at the stuff and thinking that if I didn't manage to eat it I should be very hungry indeed by morning when there were sudden and many footsteps in the corridor.

The first man through the door was the commissaire of the previous night; he was ruffing and not at all pompous and looked, in fact, rather like an outraged billy-goat. After him was Lorn, looking, I thought, a little surprised, but that was all. And after him, the young officer of the night before and several others, all highly excited.

The commissaire, his mustaches and imperial quivering, talked to me for a long time in French, speaking very rapidly. He finally paused with a question, and was suddenly purple and baffled when it became apparent that I hadn't understood a word and his efforts had been wasted.

Lorn stepped quietly into the breach.

"He says they are releasing you for the time being, but that you must remain at hand," he said. "At least, that's the gist of what he said. I'll explain later. At present you'd better leave."

I TOOK a long breath. I believe I picked up my hat. Then I turned to the commissaire.

"See here," I said earnestly. "You were entirely wrong to arrest me. I didn't murder the man. I had nothing at all to do with it. I never saw him before. I am an American citizen traveling through your city. This is preposterous. You are crazy. You've arrested an innocent man and you'll suffer for it." I had started calmly enough but was growing enraged all over again as I proceeded with the injustice that had been done me. "You are a pompous old ass of a billy-goat anyhow, and—"

"Monsieur, monsieur!" The young officer who understood English was shaking my arm. He looked pink and friendly. "You must stop, monsieur. There is danger he will comprehend a word or two."

"Oh, my God!" I said, disgusted. "How do you say what I want to say in French?"

"Monsieur is not out of danger. He must take care. I will tell for him that he wishes to thank Monsieur le commissaire for his kindness."

"You tell Monsieur le commissaire for me he can go to—" Lorn cleared his throat warningly, and I stopped.

The commissaire shot several sharp and suspicious questions just then, and I don't know what the young officer said. He did not, however, interpret literally for me, for the commissaire became gradually calm and soothed and was actually smiling a little when the young officer concluded.

At any rate, I was free. Fifteen minutes later Lorn and I were walking along the dark narrow streets toward the old hotel, bending against the furious wind which hurried any few words out of our mouths and prohibited my eager inquiries.

At the entrance to the courtyard he passed and drew me into a corner that was a little out of the wind.

"It is as well," he said in my ear, "for us not to be seen together. It is not wise at the moment. Will you precede me into the hotel?"

"But I want to see you at once. Why did they let me out? Were you right? There are things—to be done."

"Yes and no; it's a longish story. I'll come to your room tonight," he said. "Go on. I'll come later."

He turned away to let me enter the hotel ahead of him, but I seized his arm.

"Wait," I said. "What do you mean 'yes and no'?"

"I was obliged to shriek against a furious gust of wind, and he looked at me in sharp disapproval.

"Wind is tricky," he said. "We may be overheard."

"I don't care who hears. What killed him?"

He jerked his arm away.

"He was poisoned," he said. "If I am to help you, Mr. Sundeen, you must let me do it my own way. I shall come to your room after I've had dinner. We can talk then. Not here." He vanished into the darkness.

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CROFT GETS BOND VOTE THEFT CASE

Joseph Croft, one of the 22 men

indicted for the brazen and bunglesome ballot theft, on the night of March 19, last, before, during and after a meeting of the so-called "Good Government Congress" in the courthouse was released Saturday on \$7500 bonds. Croft has been in the county jail for slightly over a month.

The bonds were approved by Circuit Judge H. D. Norton, and the

sureties were listed as Mrs. Grace Dahack of Eagle Point, William E. Butler of Eagle Point and John H. Pearce, R. F. D. 3, Medford.

Of the men accused of the ballot theft, Thomas L. Brecheen, Democratic warhorse of Ashland, who boasted of "25 years personal friendship with Frank Roosevelt," alone remains in durance vile.

Concert To Show Saxophone's Worth

That the popular and familiar musical instrument, the saxophone, is capable of producing concert music of the finest quality, when properly played, is the contention of Cecil Burton Leeson, concert soloist, who will be presented in a recital here on Monday, May 1. The program will be given in the senior high school auditorium at 1 p. m., and adults, as well as students, are cordially invited.

Although the saxophone is somewhat maligned by its association with jazz, Mr. Leeson is trying to reveal the instrument's great possibilities

for concert work, and its amazing and pleasing resources. He plays with a seemingly flawless technique, possesses a tone of invariably pleasing quality, and convinces even the most skeptical that the saxophone is more than a jazz instrument.

SHOE REPAIR SHOP moved from 41 S Front to 122 N Central. Count by shoe repairing, H F Frest.

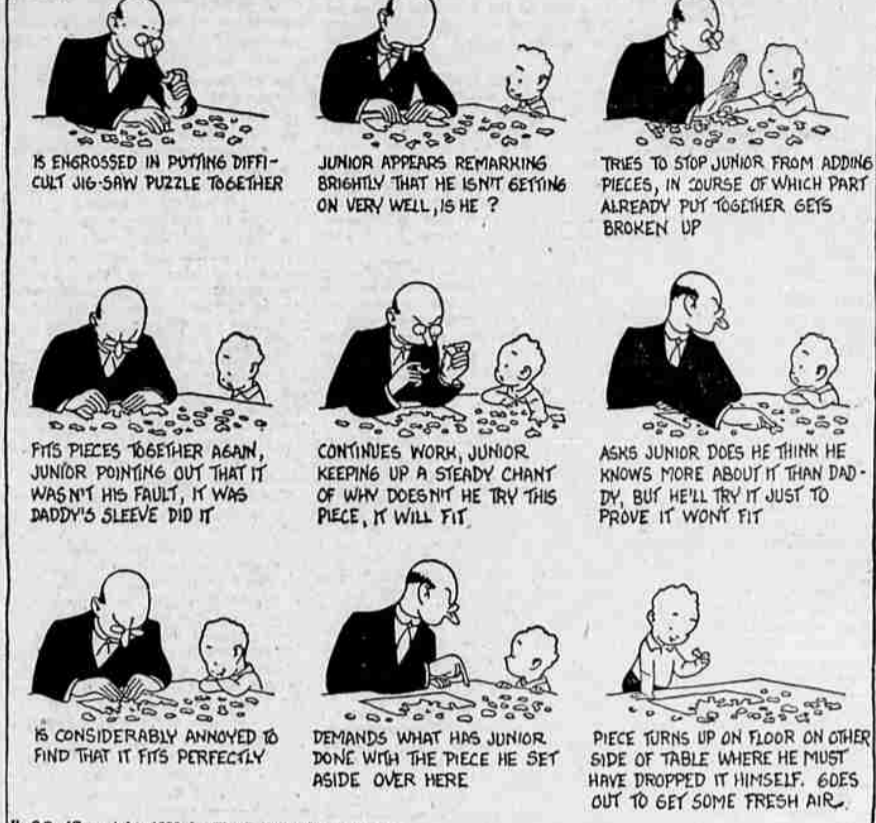
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



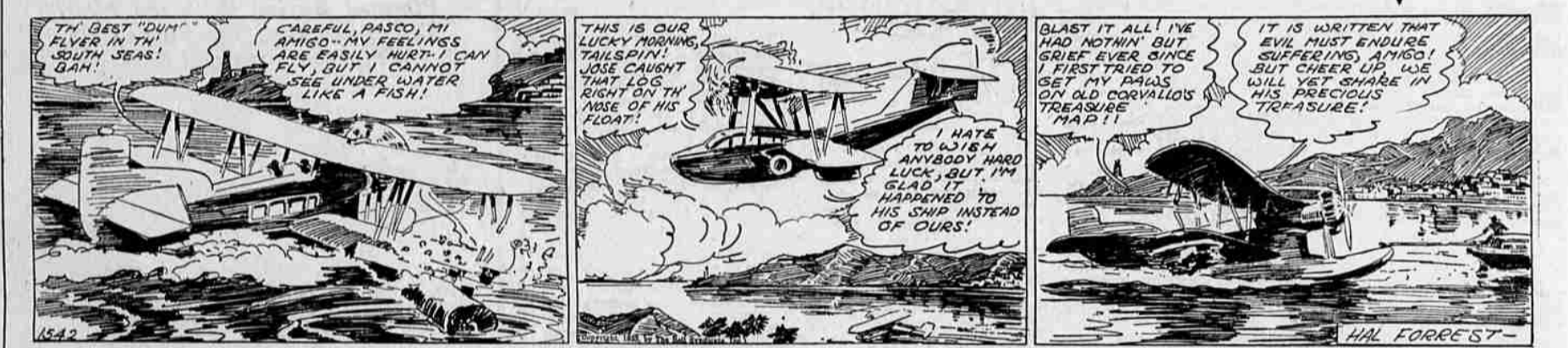
JIG-SAW AND JUNIOR

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Enemy Foiled—For The Time Being

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—What The Note Said

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—You're Right—Fanny

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



Dr. Scholl Expert At M. M. Tomorrow

A free demonstration for the benefit of persons suffering from foot trouble will be conducted at the M. M. Department store Monday and Tuesday, April 24 and 25, with an expert from the staff of Dr. Wm. M. School in attendance.

Dr. Scholl's representative will recommend treatment for various foot ailments and give advice concerning size, width and type of shoes to be worn to insure comfort, health and poise.

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