

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SYNOPSIS: Three murders have shattered the peace of a small hotel in Southern France; three murders, all unsolved. They are connected, at least in the minds of Jim Sundeen and the detective David Lorn, with an attempt to secure the tokens by means of which Sue Tally must identify herself to her brother Francis, and thus secure half her father's huge fortune. Then, expected by no one, Francis Tally arrives.

Chapter 36 NEW COMPLICATIONS

I WAS on my feet. I was barely conscious of Lorn standing just behind me. Sue was standing too, looking white and incredulous, and even her lips looked pale and stiff. Her eyes were wide and fastened on the newcomer's face as if in frantic effort to recall it.

"Francis," she said in a whisper. He was fairly tall, moderately slender, and blond with grayish eyes. He wasn't altogether handsome, for his features were a little too fine for a man, and his mouth was not firm. He wore gold-rimmed spectacles, which gave him a pedantic look, and he was muffled up in coats and gloves and a woolen scarf.

His eyes back of the spectacles were very sharp—as sharp as Grethe's, who was watching him with an expression that indicated strongly that here was at last the mouse she'd been waiting for. He smiled a little uneasily and said, in a rather uncertain voice:

"Sue, I suppose." She said nothing, just looked at him, and as no one else spoke he seemed to feel that his greeting was a bit lacking in something, for he put out his hand and smiled more blandly and said:

"It's difficult to know just how to greet you, Sister. We are almost strangers."

"Quite," said Sue in a frozen small voice, and laid her hand momentarily in his.

Francis Tally was growing more at ease. He looked at me and then discovered Lorn.

"Ah," he said at once. "How do you do, Lorn?"

"How do you do," Lorn said in an unexcited way, quite as if he'd known all along that brother Francis was about to turn up.

"Everything going well?" asked Francis Tally easily.

Lorn's eyebrows lifted a fraction of an inch.

"Not exactly well," he said. "Still, Miss Tally is quite safe."

"This," said Sue, "is Mr. Sundeen."

Francis Tally looked sharply at me.

"Sundeen?" said he.

"He has been very kind," said Sue stiffly, as if words were extremely difficult. And exactly then Marianne, in the dining room, sounded the clattering bell which announced lunch.

"It's—lunch," said Sue in a relieved way. "You'll share my table—Francis?"

"Good," said Francis, also looking relieved. "I had a very early breakfast. What's the trouble here, though—why all the police about the place?"

For a full moment no one spoke.

Then Sue said in a voice that did not belong to her:

"I'll tell you after lunch."

He looked puzzled and I think would have questioned further, but Grethe alkily intervened.

"You'll want to wash before lunch," she said, smiling pleasantly into his eyes. "I'll show you to a room. We are—temporarily without a porter."

LORN coughed. I realized that for the first time in my knowledge he seemed to be what in another man I should have called thoroughly disconcerted. He said:

"Er—Mr. Tally—you'd better—see the police first."

"See the police?" Tally paused in the act of turning to follow Madame Grethe.

"Yes," said Lorn. "You see—well, the police are here because—there've been three murders here in the last few days."

"Three murders?" said Francis. "You don't mean here? Right here in the hotel?"

"Yes. We are all practically jailed here for the time being."

It struck me that Francis Tally was either an extraordinarily brave man or he was extraordinarily callous. He said:

"H'm. Well. What's the reason for it all?"

Lorn's hidden dark eyes went to Madame Grethe. He said cautiously:

"I don't know. But I doubt if they'll let you stay here."

Luckily for you, I wanted to add,

Madame Grethe forestalled me. She said graciously:

"Oh, nonsense, Monsieur Lorn. Leave it to me. I will see that it is all settled with the police. Your room, monsieur?"

She turned away with a gesture that brought Francis Tally after her. I suppose we all moved to watch them cross the lounge.

Grethe led the way up the stairway, her body undulating gracefully under the green silk, and her red hair gleaming. But even cool Madame Grethe had not wished to use the tiny elevator that hung there.

Then I turned to Lorn. But he was suddenly withdrawn, his eyes veiled, his expression exactly as animated as that of a chair.

"Did you know he was coming?" I asked quickly.

He did not look offended at my implication that he was concealing that important bit of knowledge from Sue and from me—a knowledge that, if he had had, in fact, ought to have shared.

"No," he said quietly. "I didn't know."

"This puts a different complexion on the affair."

"Yes," agreed Lorn remotely. I wondered what he was thinking, but the unwontedly disconcerted look had entirely left him—had left, in fact, so completely that I doubted whether it had ever been there. He added:

"In the meantime we may as well go to lunch. After all, one must eat."

IT WAS a strained and dreadful meal. Not even the food was good, for Paul's hysterical nerves had apparently had their outlet in burning what was burnable and seasoning too wildly or not at all. The hors d'oeuvres were flat and tasteless, the fish crisp, and the only thing entirely edible was the cheese.

Marianne came and went, still sullen and dark and wary.

And the four of us in that still cold dining room tried to eat and drink like civilized people when I've no doubt our combined desire was to flee from the place. Mrs. Byng did not arrive at all.

The priest's table was still by some oversight set with the silver and glasses of the previous night, and it was rather dreadful to see it there, facing me, and remember how I'd last seen that flaming red beard. That thought spoiled even the cheese, and I sat there crumbling bread and not wishing, somehow, to leave the room until Sue left.

It was true that she ought to be safe now, if she was ever safe, with her brother and his detective; at the same time I was perfectly aware that Francis Tally's unexpected arrival might well give a last horrible impetus to the dreadful wheel that was revolving so ruthlessly, guided by unseen hands, there in the black depths of the old hotel.

Francis Tally himself was admirably cool. He was also stoic, for he ate his lunch, crisp fish and all, with gusto. The two, Sue and the newcomer, talked very little, and their every word was plainly audible in the silent white room and consisted of commonplaces.

He told her what boat he'd sailed on; and when he'd landed—three days previously, it appeared. She assured him in that stiff voice that did not belong to her that, yes, it was cold. And, yes, the wind was apt to blow like this for a week at a time.

It was directly after lunch that Sue and her brother retired to the parlor. Lorn, always a bit mysterious, became suddenly more mysterious and even a little agitated under that mysteriousness. He disappeared before I could get a word with him. Not that I really wanted just then, to hear his customarily unperturbed half-statements.

For I had even then that feeling of approaching climax; of haste; of urgency. There were things that must be done. If the views that I was beginning vaguely to entertain proved to be faulty and clumsy and entirely incorrect, why, then, no one but myself should erer know it.

It was sullen, brooding Marianne who found me in the dark corridor near the dead priest's room, waiting my chance to dodge the policeman on guard and enter. I wanted to search for myself.

Marianne indicated that I was to follow her, and when we reached the lobby I found the entire establishment gathered there. We were, it seemed, going to the police.

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Lovechin's self-importance increases, Monday.

last night charged with assault and robbery upon Jack Whitsett, manager of a Roseburg hotel. Whitsett, it is claimed, was lured into an alley near the hotel and was robbed of \$21, after he had been hit in the face with a heavy rock, resulting in the loss of several teeth.

Dine and dance, Tues., Thurs., Sat., Sun. nights and Sun. p. m. Bonnie's Grill.

WYOMING STRONG FOR DRY REPEAL

CHEYENNE, Wyo., May 17. — (AP)—Slowly mounting totals continued

today to point to overwhelming sentiment for repeal of the 18th amendment in the Wyoming precinct conventions held yesterday.

Each additional return added more delegates and a large majority of popular votes to the repeal column.

NEWARK, N. J., May 17. — (AP)—New Jersey, long considered a "wet" state and one of those which already

has repealed its own enforcement act, will join Michigan, Wisconsin and Rhode Island today as favoring repeal of the prohibition amendment to the United States constitution.

Real estate or insurance—Leave it to Jones, Phone 796.

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

LEGION HEAD TO ATTEND CONFAB

SALEM, May 17.—(AP)—Louis A. Johnson of Clarkburg, W. Va., na-

tional commander of the American Legion, will be here June 3 when Oregon legionnaires gather for their state convention.

State Commander Jack Eakin of Dallas today notified officers of the local legion of Commander Johnson's intention. Plans for the state convention and entertainment of the national commander were considered here last night when Commander

Eakin and Carl Moser of Portland, state adjutant, met with local members.

Salem's national championship drum corps and national championship American Legion Auxiliary trio will perform at the state convention here.

Phone 542. We'll haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

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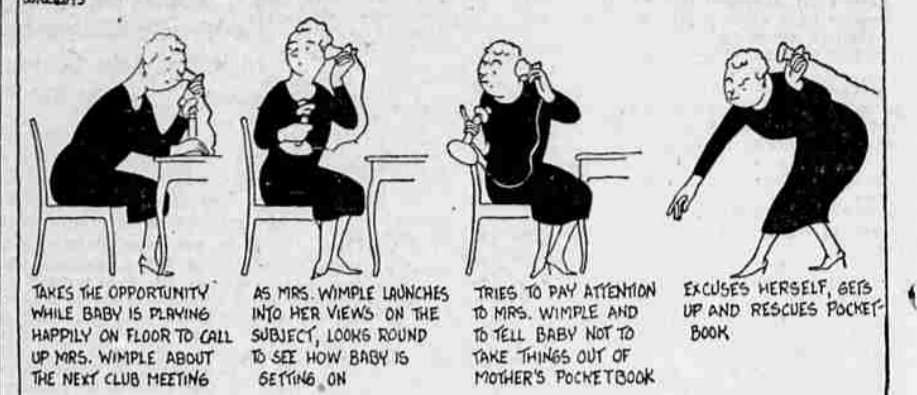
By C. M. PAYNE



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DOUBLE-HEADER

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By ULENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



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BOUND TO WIN—On The Trail

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THE NEBBS—It Don't Seem Right

By SOL HESS



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ROSEBURG PAIR ARE HELD FOR ROBBERY

ROSEBURG, Ore., May 17. — (AP)—Edward Foster, alias Edward Smith, a local restaurant cook, and George Dreene, ex-seaman, were arrested here

last night charged with assault and robbery upon Jack Whitsett, manager of a Roseburg hotel. Whitsett, it is claimed, was lured into an alley near the hotel and was robbed of \$21, after he had been hit in the face with a heavy rock, resulting in the loss of several teeth.

Dine and dance, Tues., Thurs., Sat., Sun. nights and Sun. p. m. Bonnie's Grill.

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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