

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

SYNOPSIS: The unexpected arrival of Francis Tally in the hotel, Sue, has been the indirect cause of three murders and sundry allied horrors, completely changing the outlook. Sue has in her possession a token with which she must identify herself to her brother, from whom she has been separated many years, and thus gain her share of her father's huge fortune. The entire group in the hotel goes to consult the befuddled police.

Chapter 37 BACK TO "JAIL"

A NUMBER of policemen accompanied us, and our passage through the streets caused quite a stir in the town, though I noted it only absent-mindedly and that because so many children and so many dogs seemed to spring up beside us.

I did not, of course, understand much of the interview with the commissaire and the judge; that is, I did not understand French, and neither, it developed, did Francis Tally; Lorn and Sue translated swiftly for us, but sometimes forgot momentarily to translate, which was maddening.

They told the whole story of the abduction, of the token, of the reasons we had for believing the murderer entered about it. They were constantly interrupted and questioned. It was a difficult hour, and the conclusion was what I should have expected but somehow had not.

The police did not believe their story. They listened, they questioned, they even grew excited and, I thought, sent a telegram or two; but they did not wholly credit it.

Well, of course, it was extraordinary. Still, it had happened. At any rate, they politely forbade the plan Francis Tally advanced to leave with his sister the coming morning. Even when his fine-featured face flushed and became angry and he shouted a bit, they still refused. They were polite; they were regretful; but Monsieur must see that it could not be.

They could only assure us that the detectives from Paris would arrive tomorrow and then, we gathered, it would immediately be over, the murderer in jail, and everything settled. And as far as that goes they may have been speaking the truth; we were never to know so to that.

In the end our progress back to the hotel was in the nature of a retreat to jail.

It happened that Sue walked beside me. She said nothing on the way back through white, windswept, cobblestoned streets winding narrowly between shuttered stone houses with tall, peaked roofs. In the courtyard once more, a chance movement brought her momentarily very near me with the others—Francis and Lorn, that is—ahead; a policeman was at her elbow, but she took the chance of the man's not being able to understand English.

She whispered, her eyes on Francis Tally's sloping shoulders: "I've lost the token. I can't show it to Francis. It's gone."

"No. No—he must not know. What shall I do?"

Lorn turned to hold open the door to the lobby, and Sue was obliged to pass ahead of me and ahead of Francis into the lobby. Lovschlem was waiting, rubbing his hands on which the jewels sparkled. The cockatoo chuckled.

IT WAS in all likelihood that curious and distasteful gesture of Lovschlem's that suddenly convinced me that he was again in the saddle, so to speak.

He'd been ever since Stravsky's unsolved murder vaguely uncertain, definitely perplexed. He'd had, like Grethe, an air of waiting, but in his case it had been anxious waiting. Uncertain waiting.

Where she had been poised and alert in her secretive patience, he had been, somehow, worried, inept, hesitant. It was as if his course of action were not definitely mapped; or as if he thought more of its possible failure than of its possible success.

His eyes had been veiled, darting, nervous. His face had glistered and had had a bad color. His flabby hands had hovered irresolutely, as if they could not decide upon any certain action but must hesitate over the ledger and over the inkwell. His continual smile had been no longer bland.

But now all at once there was about him a perceptible air of decision. It was as if he knew now exactly what he was going to do. There was briskness in his bulky shoulders; briskness in his fat rubbing hands; confidence in his bland

smile, and decision in his darting eyes.

Even the dirty jewels seemed to wink and glimmer with a sudden access of evil and knowing energy. "So," he said in a congratulatory way, "so you have gone to the police. You have arranged things. You may now leave my poor hotel. That is good. That is good. Not that I want my guests to leave me, but it has been a bad time here."

He advanced in an ingratiating way toward Sue. "I am so glad, Miss Tally, that your brother has finally arrived. Sorry you are to leave us. But glad he has arrived. We have tried to make you happy here in our poor way. But it has been a sad time for this young miss," he added, turning sympathetically to Francis Tally, though, oddly, he avoided meeting his eyes.

"But it appears that we are not leaving," said Francis Tally. Lovschlem's gesticulating hands arrested themselves in the air. He looked so suddenly and completely at a loss that it was almost ludicrous. In an instant the new decision was wiped out of his glittering fat face.

"But—but why?" "At once I know that whatever this new course of Lovschlem's had been it must have included Sue's immediate departure in the company of her brother. Why?"

I listened to Francis Tally's reply. He had seemed ill at ease and not too likable at first; he was more at ease now but no more likable. "Some absurdity about waiting for the detectives from Paris. I don't know what they expect to discover. But the police won't let us leave. They'd rather subject us all to the danger of staying here in your murderous hotel—"

"MONSIEUR," gasped Lovschlem parenthetically. "An unlucky accident. Only an accident."

"—than let us go to a safer place. It's outrageous. What can we do about it, Lorn?"

There was a moment before Lorn replied. He seemed to be seeking some way out of it, judging from the thoughtful, remote look in his dark eyes.

I was thinking of Lovschlem's curious use of the word accident. It was a flagrant understatement. All that horror summed up in the one word accident!

Then it occurred to me that perhaps he used the word for the simple reason that that was exactly what he meant. Perhaps it had been largely accident from his point of view.

An accident which had set away his carefully laid plans that had only righted themselves to be—or I was no judge of looks—set at odds again by this unlooked-for tenaciousness on the part of the police.

But again I asked myself why he had wanted Sue to leave at once with her brother. Was it possible that I was all wrong in my judgment of Lovschlem? Had been wrong from the beginning?

Was it possible that he was merely an interested but sincere friend to the girl—had known nothing of her inheritance, nothing of the things that threatened her, nothing of the whole ugly affair?

"There is nothing we can do just now but wait," said Lorn finally. He spoke quietly but with a slight air of reservation.

"Wait!" exclaimed Francis Tally impatiently. "Waiting seems to be all that any of you have been doing. Wait! What for? More murders?"

"I assure you it has been enforced waiting," I said. "And no pleasanter for us than it will be for you."

He turned slowly toward me. His spectacles winked in the light, and there were hard lines suddenly about his eyes and thin mouth.

"Well," he said, "it's a little different with you. I understand you are actually under suspicion."

"Not at all," Francis. Mr. Sundean was a victim of a mistake on the part of the police. He is entirely cleared."

"Really," said Francis, with only faint skepticism. Sue's cheeks went pink, and I said quickly: "Your Mr. Lorn helped me out of it."

"Hmm," observed Francis, looking at Lorn, and Lorn immediately said: "I did so at Miss Tally's request. It did not interfere with my—er—other duties."

RAILROAD HALTS ROBIN MARATHON

BENTON HARBOR, Mich., May 18. (AP)—A marathon robin, who had to keep on the wing to hold the pace with her brood, is getting a rest here.

Conductor Roy Blodgett saw the bird flying under the caboose of a Hartford-Benton Harbor freight train. Investigation revealed a nest in the under structure, bearing two blue eggs.

The next incoming freight train from Grand Rapids brought another caboose, and with it an order from division headquarters: "Use extra caboose until robin is done with car."

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE

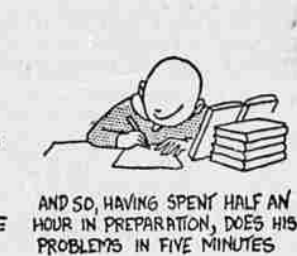
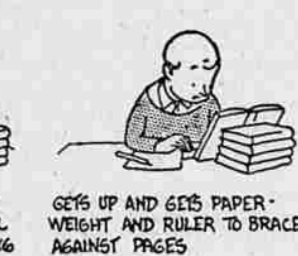
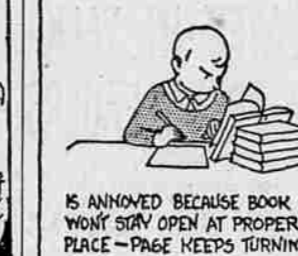
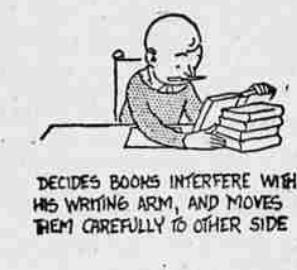
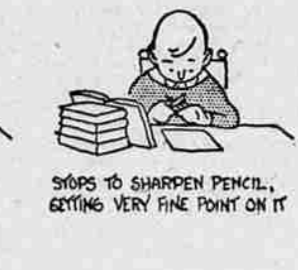
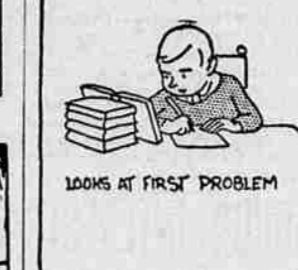
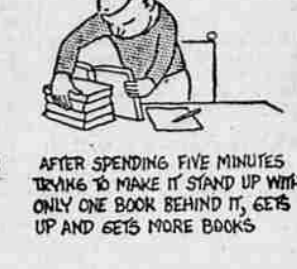
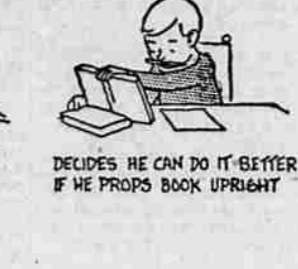
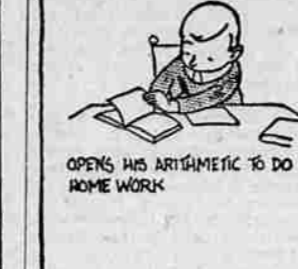


JAPAN UNABLE TO GIVE UP ARMIES

TOKYO, May 18.—(AP)—A war office spokesman declared today that Japan, because of her present operations in north China, would be embarrassed by President Roosevelt's suggestion that nations should abstain from sending armed forces outside their borders.

SNAPSHOTS OF A BOY GETTING SET FOR WORK

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



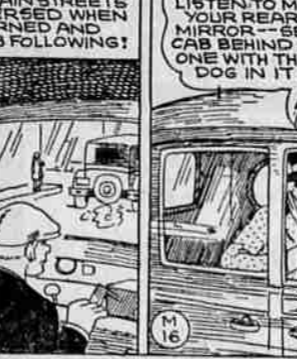
TAILSPIN TOMMY—Think What They'd Do To An Apartment

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—A Wild Ride

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—That's The Question

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



MITCHELLS WIFE NOT ABLE TO BUY STOCKS

NEW YORK, May 18.—(AP)—The government introduced evidence today that Charles E. Mitchell, former chairman of the National City bank, arranged in 1929 to make it seem that he had sold his wife stock for almost \$4,000,000 although Mrs. Mitchell's entire fortune was only a quarter of the necessary amount.

Mitchell is on trial for allegedly defrauding the government of taxes on a \$4,000,000 income in 1929 and 1930.



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