

The White Cockatoo

by Mignon G. Eberhart

Chapter 49 TEN MILLIONS—GONE

"YOU see," I went on, "you went too far to make me think Lovschlem was the murderer. You hoped he would try to escape rather than face the police, and your plan was to arrive with the police and catch me red-handed, for if Lovschlem was ever to escape he must do so then, and you thought you'd thoroughly frightened him. But it didn't work. You see, you heard the conversation in the courtyard between Stravsky and Lovschlem."

"Marianne—" The word came rather shrilly from the coat collar. "Marianne couldn't have told you. The conversation was in English. Marianne cannot understand English."

"Jim," cried Sue wildly. "It's true. Marianne has told what Marcel saw. He saw Lorn—Lorn—in the courtyard the night Stravsky was murdered. He told Marianne and he tried to tell you. And he was killed."

It was then that Lorn lost his head. For he wheeled suddenly and began to run. He was out the door and was running blindly through the court with his head down. Well—they caught him, of course.

When the detectives arrived from Paris the next morning they made short work of the whole tissue of horribly interwoven threads. Lorn was the last man I should have expected to confess, but confess he did. It was late the next day before we had the whole story. The wind was still blowing, and the lounge where Sue and Mrs. Byng and I sat was cold. Mrs. Byng was knitting furiously, and Pucci perched on the table beside us and took the liveliest interest in the conversation.

"So," said Mrs. Byng, "the Lovschlems were actually in the business after all. The Lovschlems and the dead Stravsky and this young fellow who pretended to be your brother, my dear, and this Elise person who's been wandering about like a lost soul all day. Quite a conspiracy!"

"It arose very simply," I said. "Lovschlem has confessed to conspiracy. I gather that when your mother, Sue, told them of the money waiting for you it was irresistible. The rest was simple."

"But how in the world," said Sue worriedly, "could they hope to convince a lawyer that Elise was—Sue Tally? The lawyer would be particularly suspicious, owing to Francis's murder."

"Why not? She would have the token. However, the Lovschlems did not know that the priest was Francis. They suspected me of being your brother at first; that is why Madame tried to keep me out of jail."

"I've got to know," boomed Mrs. Byng, "how Lorn escaped from the elevator after he had killed Marcel."

"He says he simply walked through the corridor while I was struggling with the police, dodged into a vacant room to avoid your coming and the others. There was less chance in walking down the winding stairway, sheltered by vines as it is, and crossing the court to the lobby door after Marcel was killed, for everyone was in the lounge. There was no one to see. Yes, chance favored him that time. But he preferred killing stealthily. By poison."

"And when he killed the priest—Francis Tally?"

"He returned again unobserved by way of the winding stairway, and later, when it was over, left the same way."

"But why did Lorn rescue you twice if his aim was eventually to make you the victim?"

"He wasn't ready for a victim yet. And he wanted Sue's confidence. And he knew that the police still would suspect me. I was in danger from him from the moment he knew that I knew of the broken seal. And he had a pretty plan to catch me red-handed. But Lovschlem didn't try to escape. And I didn't shoot. And Pucci found Sue's token."

"In that hussy's hair!" Mrs. Byng was knitting with dangerous abandon. "And you knew—"

"I knew Madame Grethe had put something in her hair when she came from Lorn's room. Pucci pulled it out, and it was Sue's half of the token. I knew it must be Sue's half, for she herself had her brother's half. And it had come from Lorn's room."

"Hons. Why shouldn't he have them? Do you remember, Sue, how remarkably definite he was at the very first about the lines that a conspiracy against you must take? He'd thought it all out. He hadn't his substitute yet, as the Lovschlems had, but he thought that part would be simple."

Mrs. Byng snatched at the knitting which had dropped out of her hands and slid toward her knees and asked: "Did the priest—your brother, I mean, my dear—did he suspect Lorn?"

"Lorn says not. He's been—boasting a bit. He says he guessed the priest was Tally, taxed him with it, and they arranged a meeting in the deserted White Salon. But Tally unwisely told him two things: told him he'd left the affair in the hands of his lawyer so, if anything happened to him, Sue could still prove herself and inherit the money. And he also told him that he had found Sue's token, had it with him, in fact, and that he was going to acknowledge her as his sister at once. That settled Francis's fate then and there. Lorn was deft and quiet with his needle."

"Elise says she was not near the north wing the night Stravsky was murdered until after his death, when Lovschlem hid her in the fireplace cupboard. So the black figure you saw must have been the priest. What was he doing there?"

"I started to say prowling, but with a glance at Sue I said instead: 'He seems to have tried to keep a close watch on Sue. I imagine he simply saw the light and came down the north corridor to investigate. We can't know, however. He must have barely missed Lorn's own visit to my room.'

Sue shivered and spoke. "Did Lorn confess about the sword?"

"Yes. He used it for the very reason he told us a criminal who was clever might have used it. He slipped into the north wing merely to reconnoiter; he wasn't so hurried then, for he thought there was no possible chance for the body being discovered before morning. And the first thing he saw was the sword clack. He took the sword and left the corridor just in time, I suppose, to escape Francis."

THERE was a short silence. I looked at Sue—Sue with her millions—Sue looked at Pucci. Mrs. Byng stared into space and her lips moved absently, and Pucci scratched. Mrs. Byng's cogitations became audible: "... and Stravsky arrived after Jim and, naturally, registered, since he was to be about the place for a while, and used momentarily the room Marcel thought was unused. Marcel did not see him—that was luck for Lovschlem. Then, after Stravsky's murder, they had to change the register hoping to keep Stravsky's identity and thus any connection with them a secret."

"Then, pursued Mrs. Byng earnestly, 'what happened to the car Stravsky had used when abducting Sue?'"

"It was Lovschlem's car," I replied wearily. "All Lovschlem had to do was put it back in the garage."

Mrs. Byng gave me a sharp look, gathered up her knitting and Pucci, and vanished. It is a singular word to use in connection with one of Mrs. Byng's substantiality, but that is what she did.

I, too, shoved back my chair and rose. Sue looked up, startled. "I've got to pack," I said. "I'm glad things have worked out for you. I hope you enjoy your—ten millions."

I had my foot on the first step of the stairs when Sue's quiet observation reached me. "I haven't ten millions," she said. "What did you say?"

"I haven't ten millions. A cable from the lawyer this morning said so. Something happened; I don't know what exactly yet. Anyway, it's gone. The ten millions."

I walked to her. I said: "See here. Why did you take the dagger from Stravsky's chest and replace it on the clock?"

"To protect you," she said steadily, and then looked up. "It is a mistake to say that the happiest moment in your life does not repeat itself, for it does, and even prolongs itself. Sue came up into my arms, and I loved her so much that there was nothing in all the world but my Sue. She said she'd marry me and go any place with me. Then she became silent. I lifted her face and asked what was wrong. 'I was only thinking,' she said, 'that there's a million or so left. But it's too late for you to do anything about it now,' she added hurriedly."

"Entirely. It was a simple matter of greed. There was that extraordinary story. There were the mil-

The End

LUMBER INDUSTRY EXPANDS IN COOS

MARSHFIELD, Ore., June 1.—(AP)—Increased employment in the lumber industry here and prospects of further expansion has given a more wholesome tone to business on Coos Bay in the past 10 days.

Although several hundred men are back at work already, unemployment here is still at a high point and probably will not be absorbed for some time, but operators today remarked on the improved outlook. Old employees are being hired so there is no prospect of itinerants, the millmen said.

Airplanes from Egypt, Palestine and Syria now converge at Bagdad, running through to Persia, India and Java.

TRUCK OWNERS WILL TEST LAW

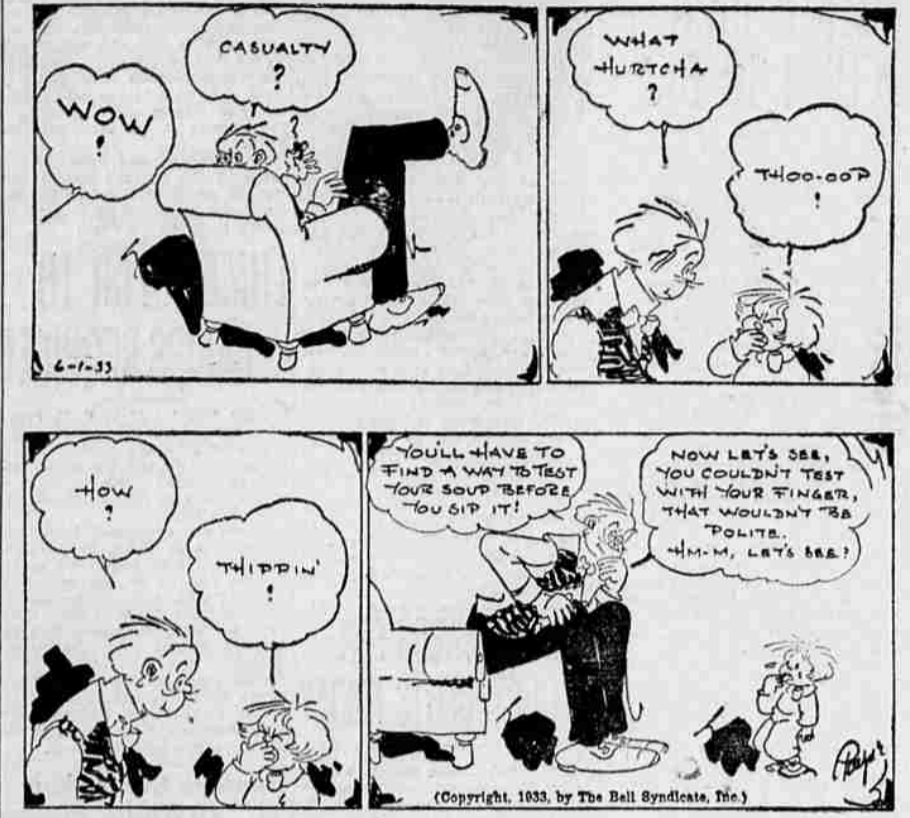
SALEM, Ore., June 1.—(AP)—An injunction to enjoin the state of Oregon from making collections pro-

vided under the truck and bus law passed by the last legislature is planned by the Truck Owners' and Farmers' Protective association, Chairman A. O. Anderson told the Associated Press today.

According to Anderson, four points under the new law, which goes into effect July 1, are considered unfair by the group. They include registration fee; tonnage tax; combined liability and state surety tax; and the ton-mile tax. The new law would mean about \$500 tax in one year as compared to \$25 before, for the average three-ton truck, according to Anderson.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



SNAPSHOTS OF A BOY GETTING INTO A TUB

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—By A Tidal Wave



BOUND TO WIN—The Departure



THE NEBBS—An Open Secret



BRINGING UP FATHER



ADMIRAL LEAHY TO BE CHIEF OF NAVIGATION

WASHINGTON, June 1.—(AP)—President Roosevelt today named Rear Admiral William D. Leahy to be chief of the navy bureau of navigation.

State governments of Germany have been authorized to double taxes on department stores.

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AFTER EVERY MEAL

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