

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

Reddy's mob. The nurses had been more often against than not. Yes, quite so! But that was how he knew Reddy's old room was empty tonight. Butch Connal had unwittingly told him so yesterday afternoon. Butch was one of Reddy's mob, and Butch had taken over Reddy's room. Butch had casually remarked that he'd be spending the next couple of nights out of town, and wouldn't be calling at the hospital again.

It remained only to get into the room once occupied by Reddy. Well, he had the "open sesame," hadn't he? Those skeleton keys? He smiled suddenly—a little crookedly. This was getting to be very much like one of his own chapters! He had enacted scenes like this a hundred times—vicariously—in his books. A queer turn of fate that he was to live one of those scenes now instead of write it!



He felt his nerves tingle suddenly at the prospect before him. Nonsense! Simple enough! Not a single one of his heroes would have batted an eyelash. The whole street where he was going was filled with speak-easies—people at the peepholes waiting to pass inspection or present credentials. No one would pay any attention to him if it took him a few moments to open a front door.

He half closed his eyes. That apart, what was it all about? Even if he delivered the letter he would never know. Had it anything to do with this worse than pervert who called himself, like some character out of blatant melodrama, the Mask? He hoped so.

The car slowed down and drew up to the curb. Colin glanced out. It was the street corner he had given the taxi cab driver as an address. He stepped to the pavement as the man opened the door, paid the other, stood there for a moment, as he watched the cab rattle away, and while a car traveling at a rate that defied all speed laws whizzed by, then he crossed to the west side of Fifth Avenue, walked a block north and swung around the first corner headed toward Sixth Avenue.

Apart from a rather hilarious sextette of men and women emerging from a basement door, and a parked car here and there, the street at the moment showed little sign of life. Exactly! The life at this hour was indoors! It had once been a very good residential neighborhood, of course, but time and prohibition had wrought its havoc in that respect.

The houses were for the most part substantial, but many of them were now used for quite other purposes than those for which they had been erected. Colin smiled thinly. He had a "membership card" himself to the "club" he was just passing. He had been walking briskly. He was now halfway down the block and he suddenly slowed his pace. The house into which he proposed to make that "felonious" entry should be just about here. Yes, here it was!

Aided by the moonlight, he selected a key from among its fellows and inserted it in the lock. It was almost too easy, but he none the less experienced a distinct sense of relief as the door gave under his hand at the first attempt.

Trapped, Colin faces death, tomorrow.

PROFITEERING TO BE DISCOURAGED

WASHINGTON, Aug. 4.—(AP)—Farm administrators will combat any "profiteering" that may develop out of the recovery program by issuing weekly reports of prices paid by consumers and prices paid to farmers for the same commodities.

Dr. Fred C. Howe, consumers' counsel in the farm administration, today announced establishment of the new service covering food and textile prices with the first report scheduled soon.

The reports, he said, will be aimed to provide the public with price information to counteract tendencies toward profiteering and toward the pyramiding of taxes paid on basic farm products by those who make the products into things sold to the consumer.

HOME LOAN OFFICE OPEN IN ONE WEEK

PORTLAND, Aug. 4.—(AP)—Oregon offices of the home owners loan corporation will be opened here in about one week, John P. Lipscomb, manager, said upon his return from Washington, D. C., Wednesday.

"The matter of organization is not wholly decided," he said. "I expect to have a staff of a dozen persons, perhaps less."

Grande. That's somewhat in the air yet." Formal announcement that his organization is ready to receive applications from distressed home owners will be made within a week, Lipscomb said, and instructions on the filing of applications will be given.

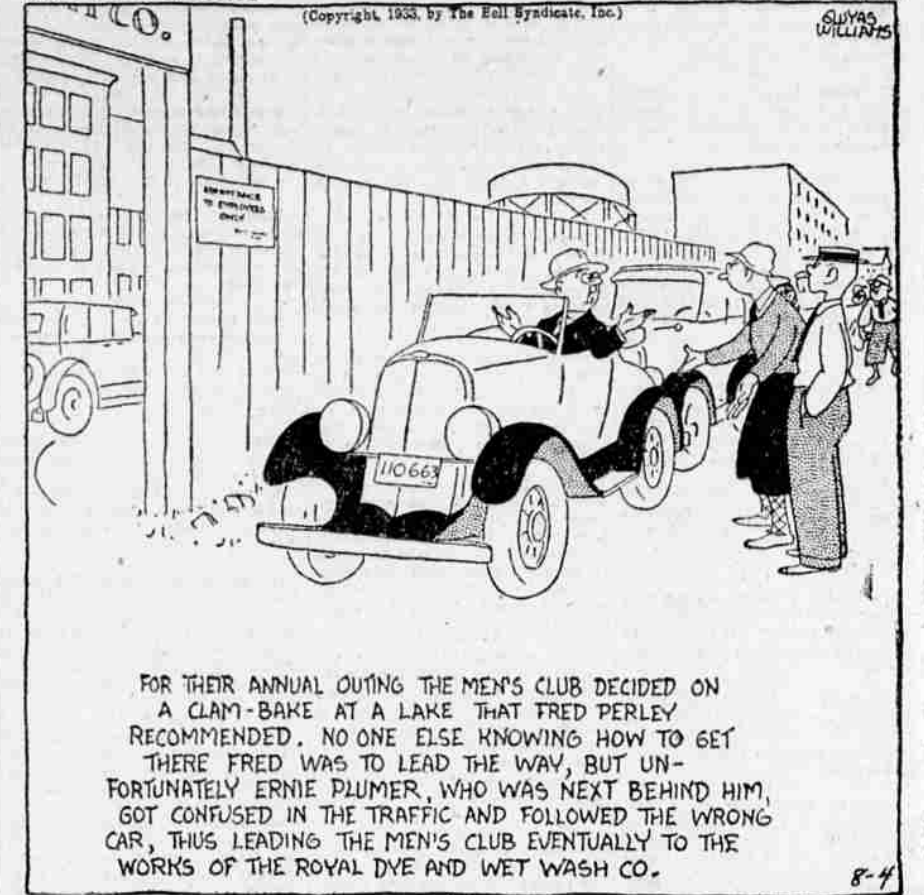
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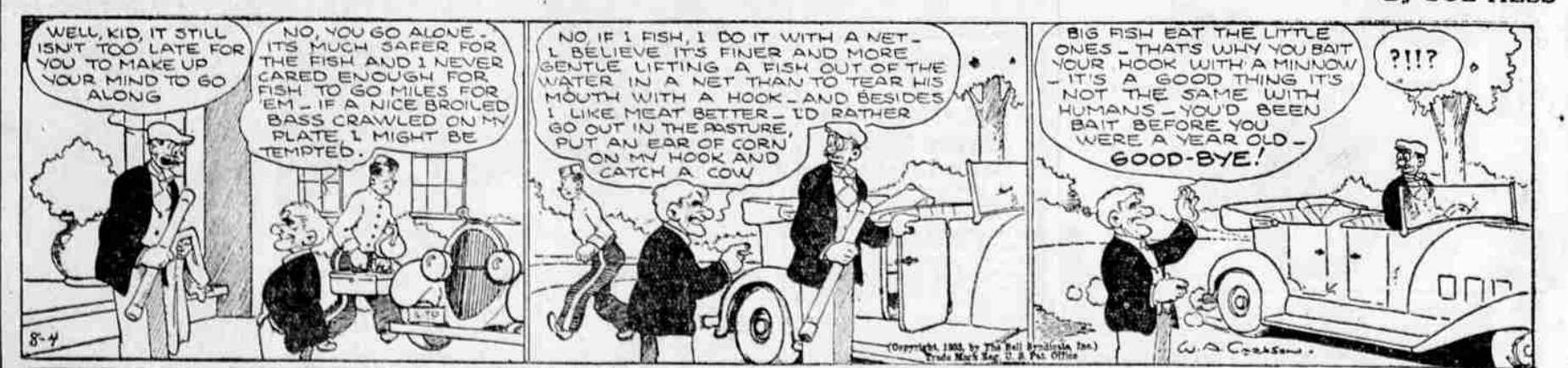
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