

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

NEWS: Colin Hewitt must be the "club" to solve one of the gang, Joe Lazarre, that Captain Doltaire and a schooner full of refugees plan to attack the place. Colin is in danger from the Mask. New York letter, and although the Mask owns the "club" Colin hopes a letter he carries may give him aid from Lazarre. He borrows Germaine's motor boat, but will not allow her to go along.

Chapter 21 IN THE DARK

"AND I suppose," Germaine returned—and hesitated slightly, "that nothing could persuade you not to go?"
"No," he answered quietly. "You know why."
"Yes," she said slowly. "I know why. Well, then, go and get on some dry clothes. Jacques will see the boat has plenty of gas and have it ready for you at the end of the wharf in half an hour. Will that be time enough?"
"Like the waving of a magic wand!" Colin declared cheerily. "Thanks a lot!"

She was in shadow, her back to the light that streamed out from the hall. He could not see her face.
"Good luck!" she said—and put out her hand.

And then, before he could answer, she had turned abruptly and was gone.

He went down the veranda steps and made his way to the hotel at the other end of the village. Here he proceeded to change his clothes. There was no sound from the next room. It Laroque and Bolduc had returned to the village, they had not returned to the hotel—and probably never would. He smiled dryly. What a filthy mess he was in! Ooze, mud, slime—but it hadn't got through into the pockets. Lazarre's letter was untouched, and the revolver, together with the extra supply of cartridges, was quite dry.

He stripped, rubbed down, got into clean clothes, tucked the letter, revolver and cartridges into his pockets, added an adequate supply of cigarettes and matches—there would be a lonely few hours of it there and back—and looked at his watch. Ten minutes of ten. He was surprised to find that it was no later. Well, so much the better. All the longer start on Doltaire!

He glanced around the room. Those clothes! But no one would come into the room tonight. And even if the clothes were seen, what then? The only suspicion that might arise was that their unspacious condition was due to an over-free indulgence on their owner's part in—whiskey blanc. A tribute and a compliment to the national drink of French Canada! He laughed, blew out the lamp and left the hotel.

Within his allotted ten minutes he reached the wharf. It was deserted, empty save for a figure that emerged suddenly out of the darkness as it clambered up over the edge of a stringpiece.

"Is that you, m'sieu?" Jacques asked in French.

"Yes," he answered. "Everything all ready, Jacques?"
"But yes, m'sieu. The boat is here. There is plenty of gas. And in the locker at the stern m'sieu will find some hot coffee and sandwiches."

INSTINCTIVELY Colin turned his head shoreward along the wharf in the direction of the village and the twinkling window lights. "Germaine!" he said softly under his breath; and then aloud: "That is most kind of mademoiselle. Will you tell her that I—that I am very grateful to her. And now my thanks to you and I'll be off!"
Colin lowered himself over the stringpiece and dropped into the boat below.

"All right, Jacques," he called back. "Cast off!"
"All clear," Jacques answered. "Good luck, m'sieu!"

The launch shot out from the wharf, and Colin, settling himself for his solitary run—about two hours, he figured it, judging from the time it had taken Germaine and himself to get as far as the point yesterday—headed for the lighthouse on the extremity of the cape.

And presently he rounded the cape, his eyes straining ther out to seaward. It was pitch black. He was showing no lights himself—and it was rather obvious that Doltaire would not be showing any either. He could see nothing—no shadowy outline of a schooner out there. But Doltaire would not be off the cape for another two hours. Bolduc had said at half-past eight. That meant half-past ten. It was only ten now.

That gave him half an hour's start to begin with before Doltaire even sent ashore for his men and finally decided on his plans—and Doltaire's schooner, though it would, of course, have an auxiliary engine, was not at all likely to be any more speedy than this launch.

With the lighthouse behind him now, Colin set his course; but, erring a little on the side of safety, headed slightly in toward the coastline. There was the promise of a moon later—just when, he did not know. But unless it came out before there was an aid to visibility, it would be an hour at least before he could hope to pick up the point.

And then his face hardened. He must get into touch with Lazarre—warn Lazarre. He did not know Lazarre. True, he had a description of Lazarre—but it was a description that would fit a thousand other dark-complexioned men. Could he go up to the club and ask bluntly for Lazarre? How would Lazarre explain that to the others?

Then, otherwise, how pick Lazarre out from his fellows—unless Lazarre went around half naked, exhibiting that bullet scar on his right shoulder? But even granting that he was able to identify the man, how get to Lazarre without any of the others knowing it? This for Lazarre's own sake.

BUT suppose he couldn't reach Lazarre without any of the others knowing about it? Doltaire's raid involved everyone at the club—including Lazarre. The warning would have to be given just the same. How, then, to account for Colin's presence at the club, and how he came to know about Doltaire? And suppose he did get the ear of Lazarre alone? What would Lazarre do? He would hardly desert his companions. Then how would Lazarre explain the warning he had received?

And then he did not know what racket they were exploiting at the club under the Mask's guiding genius, but suppose, even in the face of a warning that made it clear they would be hopelessly outnumbered, they decided to fight it out? What then? Lazarre possessed no "charmed life" any more than the rest of them. And Lazarre dead—a twist! He laughed suddenly out into the night. He had always claimed that suspense was the essence of a story, and that the apparently unsolvable problems piled one upon another were the essence of suspense. A story? A ghastly analogy! It only this were no more than—a story!

Time passed. The moon came out. There was the point. He swung around it and headed into the bay. Lights, window lights, showed dimly in the distance. The club! On the lap of the gods—there was no other answer.

Hot coffee and sandwiches! Germaine! He had a far greater stake on the board now than the salvaging of his own skin. The vista of years stretched out before him, glad years, all that he yearned for—if she cared.

The roar of waters came to him faintly. He pulled himself together. What was it they had said only yesterday about the Cascade R? Two channels emptying into the bay; deep water if one hugged the shore of the point—deep enough that if one went up the river a bit one could moor alongside the shore without fear of the boat being stranded by the tide.

The lights on the shore grew brighter. He was near enough to the club now. It would only be a short walk if he landed here; whereas, from the roar of the falls that portended fast water, the river might prove tricky if he went up any farther. He stopped the engine and headed in for the shore, reversed—and the nose of the launch grounded gently.

He stood up, moved toward the bow—and halted in blank stupefaction. Someone was crawling out from under the bit of decking there. A shaft of moonlight fell upon the figure. Germaine!

And stupefaction passed. He was beside himself with fear and anxiety. He sprang toward her and grasped her by the shoulders—violently. "You!" he blurted out almost insanely. "Don't you know why I said you were not to come! Don't you understand! Don't you know that I love you—that there is danger here!"
And then in the moonlight he could see that her eyes were wet, though her lips were smiling.

"It's fifty-fifty, isn't it?" she answered. "I love you too."
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Tomorrow, Colin plunges into danger.

TREASURY WORKS TO REOPEN BANKS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 21.—(AP)—The treasury today continued trying to reorganize the nation's banking structure, its task made more clear cut by official figures showing that \$902 financial institutions had emerged from the hectic March holiday with available resources of \$20,850,491,000.

That was the condition of the banks last June 30. Since then, more banks have reopened, some few have closed again. But at the end of reorganizing the nation's banking structure, its task made more clear cut by official figures showing that \$902 financial institutions had emerged from the hectic March holiday with available resources of \$20,850,491,000.

It was the treasury's job to put more concentration now on these so they may be re-opened or re-organized and their total deposits of \$1,028,347,000 made available.
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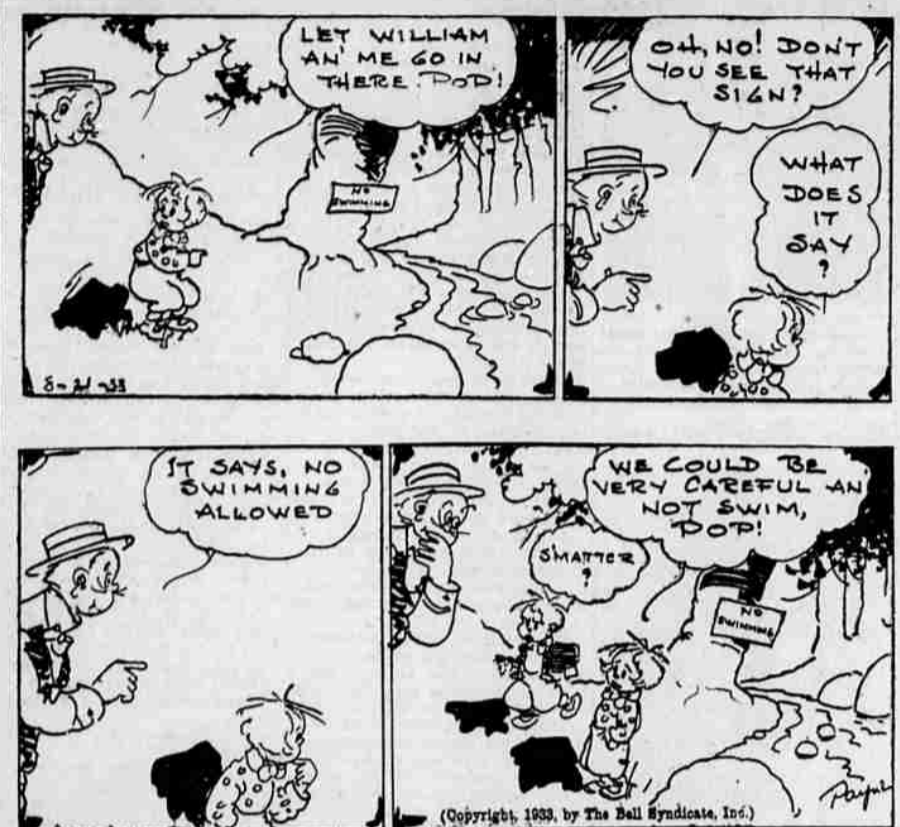
OREGON JUNIORS OFF TO TOPEKA

POCATELLO, Idaho, Aug. 21.—(AP)—A jubilant group of Oregon American Legion junior baseball players from Woodburn—every one with a fighting heart as large as a watermelon—were preparing today for their trip to Topeka, Kan., where they will play for the western inter-sectional championship Aug. 25-27.

can Legion junior baseball players from Woodburn—every one with a fighting heart as large as a watermelon—were preparing today for their trip to Topeka, Kan., where they will play for the western inter-sectional championship Aug. 25-27. The Woodburn boys scored two runs in the ninth inning of the northwest titular game against the Pocatello American Legion nine Saturday to tie the count, and in a spectacular exhibition of baseball went on to score another tally in the 15th frame to win 4 to 3 and capture the Pacific northwest title. In the semi-finals, they had won from Walla Walla 8 to 2. Pete Bevans, Woodburn hurler, took a large share of the credit by pitching the entire game and fanning 23 Pocatello batters.

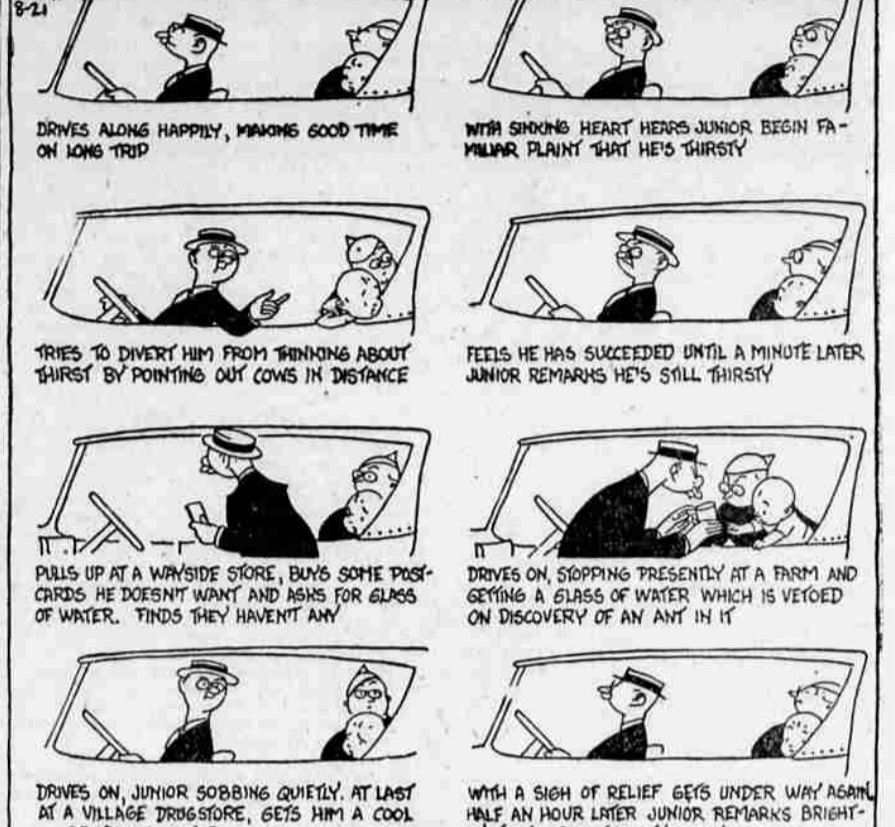
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



AUTO THIRST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Lull Before - -

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Prisoners

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Welcome, Stranger

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



Railroad Offers Labor Day Rates
Vacation trips over the Labor Day week-end this year will be placed within reach of thousands of persons through an offering of cent-a-mile roundtrips by the Southern Pacific company, it was made known today.

The low fares planned as the latest of the railroad's now famous dollar day transportation bargains, will be in effect August 31 to September 4 throughout six western states, according to A. S. Rosenbaum, district freight and passenger agent. Excursionists will have until September 12 to complete their journeys, he stated.



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