

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

Colin Haultis has found Germaine Tremblay's boat for a dangerous expedition to search for a "club" on the St. Lawrence that a man named Doltaire plans to hijack the club in a few hours. Germaine hides in the boat; when she is discovered she confesses her reason for staying away was love for Colin. Colin, New York killer, with the help of a mysterious letter she is to give to Germaine. But he does not know which one is Germaine.

Chapter 23 THE AMBUSH

"COLIN—be careful!" Germaine called after him.

"Right!" he called back reassuringly. "I've got to be too careful. That's the whole trouble. Don't worry."

The bank was steep, and at the top thinny wooded. He clambered up and began to make his way along toward the club. At times, through the trees, he could catch the glimmer of the club's lights, and at other moments they were lost to him; but the river was guide enough.

His mind was probing again. What plan was he to pursue? To go straight to the club, meet them as a group of gentlemen and sportsmen, and tell them that he had overheard a plot to raid the club tonight, seemed the most logical and sensible course to adopt. He would meet them all. He would naturally be introduced to Lazarre.

And suppose, to test him, they did ask him why, under such circumstances, he had not brought help with him from Cap à l'Orage? Well, he was a stranger there himself, wasn't he? He had not known whom to go to for help, and, besides, there had not been too much time to spare. So he had come himself as quickly as he could.

Undoubtedly that was the best thing to do. It guaranteed Lazarre against any possible suspicion of having any connection with him, Colin; and it promised, almost certainly, an opportunity of getting Lazarre aside for a few words in private.

He was close to the club now. The distance had not been great—some six or seven hundred yards, he judged. And now he halted suddenly.

He had come out on a broad path that led up from the water's edge, and, looking down the path, he could see, outlined in the moonlight, a large boat moored alongside a wharf. One of the club's big power boats, of course. Looking the other way, he could see that, a few yards from where he stood, the path swerved sharply in the direction of the club.

He went on again, and, as he made the turn in the path, thanks both to the moonlight and the club's window lights which now shone out unobscured, he was at once able to chart his surroundings quite easily. Perhaps ten yards ahead of him the path debouched on a clearing, and across the clearing a short distance away, the clubhouse, facing him, was now in full view.

And through the trees, thinning as he neared the end of the path, he could see to his left a single window light and the shadowy outline of the power house that Bouchard had talked about. He would like very much to find out what that power house concealed. Well, perhaps he would, even though he wasn't staying for the show! If Lazarre—

HE was just at the edge of the clearing now, and for the second time since he had left the launch he came to a sudden halt. It was imagination, no doubt, for the roar of the falls, louder now than ever, would drown out all ordinary sounds; but it seemed as though he had heard something stirring close at hand.

He turned, stared back along the path, and suddenly leaped to one side—too late. Two forms which seemed to have risen from the earth at his feet hurled themselves upon him, flinging him to the ground before he had a chance to defend himself. These were "members" of the club, of course, on guard out here against another incursion by the spy of the other night—and he was being mistaken for the spy.

"Look here!" he protested. "I—"

A French oath answered him. Something crashed upon his head—then darkness.

Colin came to his senses conscious that something was being thrust roughly into his mouth, conscious of a voice speaking in French—but only vaguely conscious of the meaning of the words:

"Bah! And so you have no cord,

"Bah! Well, you see! His handkerchief for his mouth, and his necktie to hold it there. Tight! Tie it around the back of his head—tight. And now his arms—behind him and around that little tree. Lash his wrists together. Here's his belt."

Colin felt his arms wrenched violently around behind his back, and instinctively, though his strength seemed to have been drained out of him, he made an effort to resist—only to be pushed savagely back on the ground again.

"Hah!" ejaculated the same voice. "His head is harder than I thought. His little nap did not last long. He will not make any noise now to spoil Doltaire's plans—and he is well anchored so that he cannot run away to his friends over there. And, besides, we will be here until it would be too late for him to do anything anyway."

Colin's brain was clearing. He felt his strength returning—but he lay without movement now, listening. Something had been said about Doltaire, hadn't it? Two men, he could see, were crouched on the ground close beside him. They had spoken in French, and it would seem from what they said that they were Doltaire's men! But here now? Impossible! His brain, still sick, was playing tricks upon him.

"A knife would have been better," came the snarling response. "That wouldn't have made any noise either."

"Well, use it now, if you want to," returned the first speaker shortly. "For me, I don't care. But you will have plenty of killing to do, my good pigsticker, before the night is over, and since this one here can't fight against us now, for me he doesn't count any more."

"Thanks!" growled the other sarcastically. "But I don't care, me either." He thrust himself forward toward Colin. "You hear?" he sang out. "You are in luck."

Gagged, Colin could not have answered if he would. He had closed his eyes, striving desperately to make sense of what had been said about Doltaire, and he gave no indication of being aware that he had been addressed.

"Try your English on him, Baptiste," laughed the other man. "The apaches from New York don't speak French."

Baptiste ignored the sally.

"For the love of God," he grumbled impatiently. "We are all here long ago! What is Doltaire waiting for? He's had time enough, hasn't he?"

"For me, I would say no—because he is still waiting," came the dry reply. "Listen! Doltaire is no fool. He has the cunning of a fox, that boy! What does he do tonight when he finds out from that fellow Bouchard that there is a short way over the hills and through the woods? He comes that way—there is then no risk of the schooner being seen by any of them out there in the moonlight. And, besides, we save all that time."

Baptiste answered with a grunt—and the two lapsed into silence.

Colin's head throbbled as though a thousand devils were pounding hammer blows upon it, and as they pounded they seemed to mock and jeer at him in unholy mirth. Despite the pain, his mind was lucid now, functioning normally again. All this for nothing! He was too late. Doltaire and his men were already here. The start that he had counted on, the time enough and to spare, had simply not existed.

"To go overland, if one could, Germaine had said, would cut the time in half. He had thought of going that way himself but it had never entered his head that Doltaire would land his men at Cap à l'Orage. It had taken approximately two hours to make the trip in the launch. It was Doltaire who had reached here first with time to spare.

Colin's mind was working in little flashes now as though it were teasing before him parts of a picture puzzle to be pieced together. Laroque and Bolduc, taking Bouchard with them, he remembered, were to have left the shack to keep their rendezvous with Doltaire shortly after he had started back for the village, so Bouchard, of course, had been on hand to act as guide.

Bouchard would not have led them through the village. . . . No one at Cap à l'Orage would know anything about it. . . . The loot of the club could be neither bulky nor heavy if Doltaire was prepared to bring it back overland and . . .

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Colin learns more, tomorrow, of his murderous companions.

PICKPOCKETS KID

CHIEF OF POLICE

STOCKTON, Cal., Aug. 23.—(AP)—Chief of Police E. W. Gaddy of

Turlock is convinced that pickpockets pilch their trade during the melon carnival in Turlock last week.

After many people had complained of pocket thefts, officers here were told today, Chief Gaddy visited the carnival to make a personal investigation. In one pocket he carried a bulgy wallet in which he placed a note reading "Did you ever get fooled?"

After spending an hour on the grounds he returned to the office with a wallet still in his pocket, but his associates revealed that on opening it he found a different note saying:

"Quit your kidding."

Reid, Murdock & Co., cannery of the Monarch brand Bartlett pears will be represented at Medford this season by Myron Root.

U. S. HAS LARGE SHARE OF WHEAT

WASHINGTON, Aug. 23.—(AP)—There was approximately one billion 120,000,000 bushels.

bushels of wheat in the world on August 1 and the United States had about 40 per cent of it.

Actually, the figures stood at 850,000,000 bushels and 283,851,000 bushels respectively but they were the largest in all history for that date. The world total was 180,000,000 bushels larger than a year ago and topped the previous high record by 100,000,000 bushels.

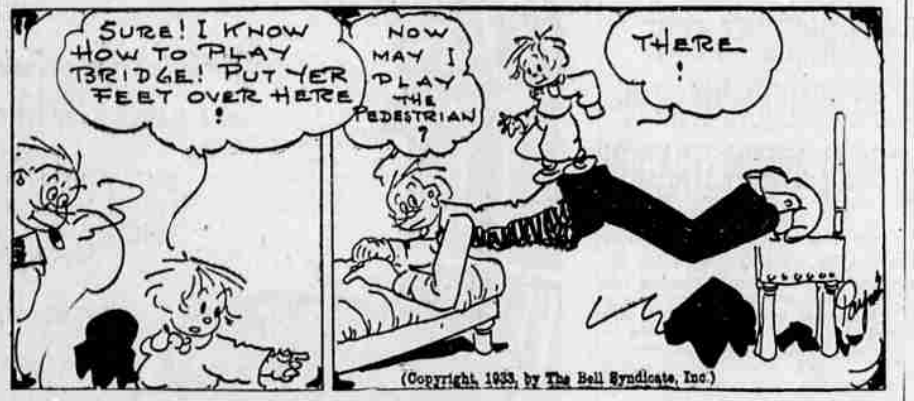
The United States had as much wheat as the combined stocks of Canada, Australia, Argentina and all other exporting areas plus grain on ocean passage.

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

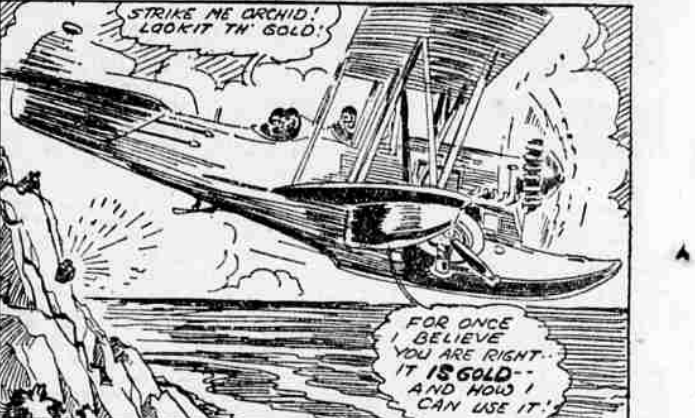
Real estate or insurance—leave it to Jones. Phone 696.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



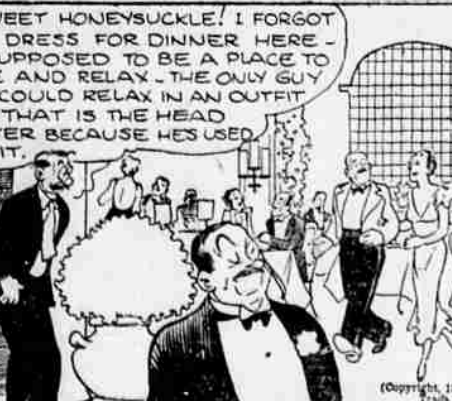
TAILSPIN TOMMY—"Splitting" The Treasure!



BOUND TO WIN—Lotta Finds Briar!



THE NEBBS—I'm Sorry Now



BRINGING UP FATHER



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

REAL PROPERTY TAX LIMITATION SOUGHT

PORTLAND, Aug. 23.—(AP)—The Portland realty board today started a movement toward circulation of an

initiative petition to amend the constitution of Oregon limiting the tax on real property to 25 mills a year.

This limitation would be similar to constitutional limitation now in Washington where real property may not be taxed more than 40 mills in any one year. The present tax in Portland is 47½ mills.

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