The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

John Colin Hewitt, mystery writer, is scouring New York disguised as Clarkie Lunn, a crook, for a trace of the Mask. The Mask is czar of the underworld, and besides has threatened Colin's life. Butch Connal has tipped Colin off to the fact that Captain Dollaire, rum runner who raided the Mask's counterfeiting plant on the St. Lawrence river, is in New York, at Spinelli's night club. A supposedly drunk man at Spinelli's bar has described Dollaire and Heimie Schwarm, to whom Dollaire hopes to sell a cargo of rum. The "drunk" is one of Butch's mob.

Chapter 31

ENTER HEIMIE

THE barkeep was back. He grinned at Colin as the "drunk" lurched away.

"What's his name?" asked Colin.

"Peter K. MacBride." The barkeep's grin broadened. "Didn't he wish a card on you?"

Colin shook his head.

"No. Have I been neglected?"

"We sweep 'em up off the floor in the morning," confided the barkeep with a laugh. "He carries a pocketful around with him. But he's all right when he's sober. Got a bit of money, so they say—retired—or something."

"Well, I think I'll blow," smiled Colin. "When he comes back tell him I had a telephone call."

He swung away from the bar, left the room, and began to make his way downstairs. Peter K. MacBride, whatever his real name might be, was obviously one of Butch's "inside" men—a "feeder" for the gang. And MacBride's warning was ringing in his ears.

How much, or how little, MacBride already knew, or whether the man had only "sensed" something in the air, mattered little. That, in MacBride's words, hell would bust loose here before the night was over, was exactly what he, Colin, was expecting—and he was quite sure in his own mind that he could have told MacBride why!

His own plans? He had none—except to watch Dollaire and be guided by circumstances. Dollaire was the bait. His, Colin's, job was to see who snatched at it!

Colin reached the entrance to the dance hall and paused for a moment in the doorway amongst what seemed the ever-present knot of people who stood there peering in. A "turn" was on. He had seen it before. A girl was covering the floor with prodigious leaps and bounds—but very little covered the girl. Spinelli called it his psychic dance.

COLIN'S eyes roamed around the room—and came to rest almost immediately on Heimie Schwarm, whom he identified without hesitation from MacBride's description. At the table beside the booze baron was a stocky, powerfully built, black-haired man — Dollaire, of course.

They were sitting, as MacBride had said, in one of the "stalls" near the door, a bottle of champagne between them. Colin smiled cryptically. Spinelli never overlooked a bet that meant a little extra profit.

The "stalls" were nothing more than railed-off spaces on a slightly raised platform that was built around three sides of the room, but they possessed comfortable lounge chairs and the view was better, so why should not a small fee be charged for their use? Spinelli charged it. But they were popular. Most of them were occupied tonight.

Colin moved forward into the room. He contented himself with a table on the floor level not far from the booze baron's stall—he could watch Dollaire, not only unobtrusively, but much better from here than from a stall.

Again his eyes roamed around the room. The tables, three deep, that separated the space reserved for dancing from the stalls were fairly well occupied too. Spinelli would be able to declare a dividend tonight!

He ordered a bottle of wine, and sipped it leisurely. Applause greeted several suggestive numbers on Spinelli's programme. Colin saw little of them. The minutes and the quarter-hours slipped by. Heimie Schwarm and Dollaire had become a little uproarious, though not offensively so.

Had the deal been perfected? Had Heimie Schwarm become the owner of a choice cargo from St. Pierre and Miquelon? It mattered little. They were attacking another bottle of champagne. Heimie Schwarm had paid for it from a huge wad of bills that he had wrenched, because of its bulk, with no little difficulty from his pocket.

THE Dutchman's combination of straw hair, brilliant red tie, and inch-square checked suit of light fawn as a color scheme struck a distinctly bilious note. Dollaire, swarthy, beetle-browed, narrow-eyed, with thin, hard lips and protruding jaw, was the reverse of being prepossessing.

And then, as he watched the two, a fine point of ethics arose in Colin's mind to trouble him. Believing that Dollaire was in immediate danger, had he any right to sit here and not warn the man? Mentally he began to debate the pros and cons.

What could he say to Dollaire? Nothing definite—but enough, say, to cause Dollaire to take alarm and

His own plans? He had none.

leave the place. Well, what then? If the Mask had Dollaire under surveillance here, Dollaire would be no better off outside than in.

Dollaire had gratuitously thrown his hat into the ring. He had destroyed one of the Mask's pet schemes, and had murdered at least two—for Lazarre might still be alive—of the Mask's men. If Colin knew the Mask at all, Dollaire, whether he were put on the spot here or elsewhere, was a doomed man from the night he had raided the club on the Cascade River.

Dollaire was a callous, cold-blooded murderer — boasting his prowess. One's finer instincts revolted even at the thought of his existence. Warn Dollaire? If the Mask or any of his men were here to see, then Clarkie Lunn might as well never have been created. He had not come here to warn Dollaire; he had come here to watch the Mask play his hand.

There were Germaine, himself, their future, his own life at stake. Ethics! His lips tightened. Was it ethics to fling all that aside on the chance of being able to accomplish what, at the utmost, could be no more than a postponement of the inevitable showdown between the Mask and Dollaire?

Suppose he were writing it? Angrily he sought to fling the sudden intrusion aside—but it persisted. One always had to justify the hero's actions. Would the hero be justified in the readers' eyes if he stood pat under these circumstances?

"By God," Colin stated fiercely to himself, "I'd write it that way, anyhow!"

A waiter stood at his elbow.

"Pardon me, sir. There's a couple of gentlemen over there that would like you to join them."

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Tomorrow. Colin meets an exceedingly dangerous former acquaintance.

7 MOUNTAIN CLIMBERS KILLED IN DOLOMITES

TRENTO, Italy, Sept. 1.—(AP)—Seven mountain climbers were killed yesterday and Tuesday in the Italian Dolomites, according to reports reaching here today. Five were Germans, one of them a woman, one was a Czech, and the other an Italian priest.

A boy burglar, caught at Fort Wayne, Ind., confessed to attempting to bake biscuits in one of the homes he burglarized.

PINE ASSOCIATION FOR LUMBER CODE

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore., Sept. 1.—(AP)—The Western Pine association adjourned here yesterday afternoon in complete harmony with the national lumber code recently adopted at Washington.

The action brought to an end a two-day convention of 250 lumber representatives from 12 western states.

Opposition to regulations for the allocation and control of production disappeared today as revised articles of the association were presented to revamp administrative clauses. Both large and small operators reached an agreement.

The new provisions permit a more complete representation of smaller operators and proposes the establishment of four district offices within the western pine division.

Location of the offices were to be at San Francisco, Klamath Falls, Spokane and Albuquerque. Each district will have its own board of directors.

A water-power grist mill at Grand Rapids, O., on the Maumee river, is 90 years old.

Fifteen plowpoints were found in a pine stump on one Mississippi farm.

CCC SUPPLY BIDS URGED IN EUGENE

Word has been received at the Chamber of Commerce here from the district C. C. C. quartermaster at Eugene, requesting firms in Medford and vicinity to make bids on material for the camps. The bids will be on lumber, hardware, roofing paper, millwork and plumbing supplies. Anyone interested in making bids is requested to get in touch with the Medford Chamber of Commerce.

S'MATTER POP—

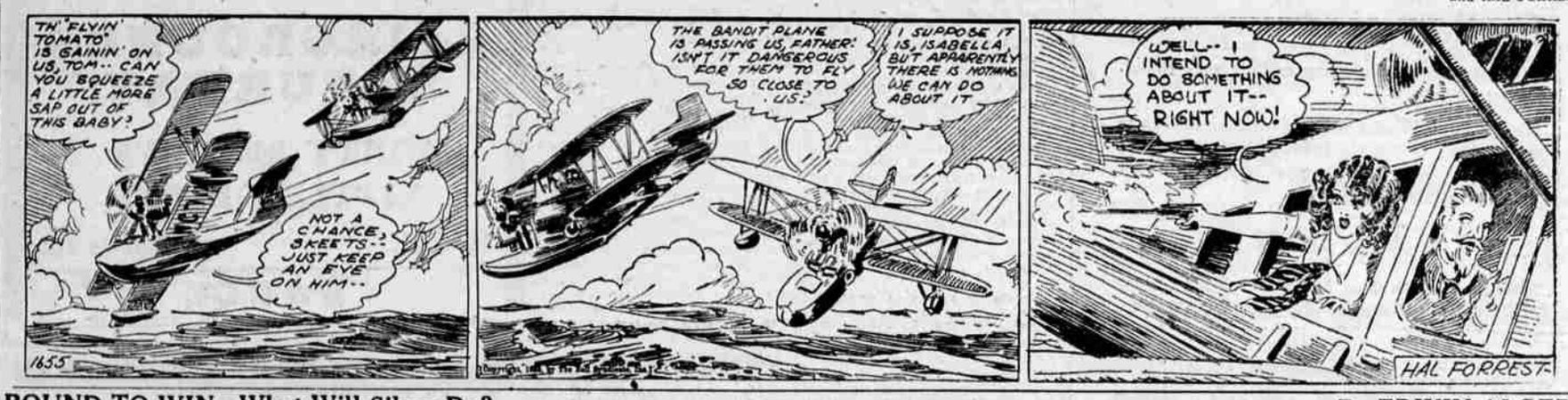
By C. M. PAYNE

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Isabella's Challenge To The Enemy!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

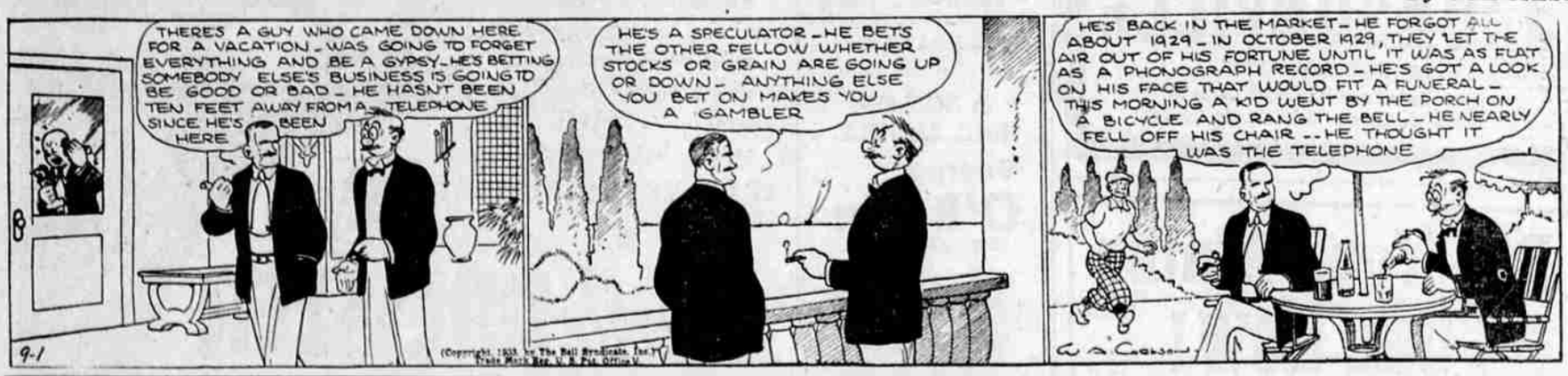


BOUND TO WIN—What Will Silver Do?

By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—The Speculator

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus

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