

# The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

**SYNOPSIS:** Colin Reilly, mystery writer, disguised as Clarke Lunn, a crook, is trying to catch the trail of the Mask, New York underworld ruler who has threatened to kill him. He sits in Spinelli's night club watching Captain Dolaire, Canadian rum runner, drinking with Helmie Schorm, New York flooze queen, because all the time that Dolaire is marked for death by the Mask because the Canadian hit-lacked the Mask's counterfeiting plant on the St. Lawrence river. Colin hopes that the Mask's agents, trailing Dolaire, may reveal themselves inadvertently to him. He is invited to another table.

## Chapter 32 OLD FRIEND

COLIN turned around. One of the two men was beckoning to him. Oh, well, one could watch Dolaire from there as well as here—and it would not be politic for Clarke Lunn to refuse an invitation from such a man as Harry the Lynx.

Harry the Lynx was a crook of no small degree. He, Colin, did not know just what the other's racket was, but he had met the man many times in various dives and hangouts when, as Colin Hewitt, he had been out on his nightly prowls after material—and, subsequently, as Clarke Lunn, he had met the other frequently in the same places.

Colin rose to his feet—and stood there for an instant as though riveted to the spot, the blood pounding in sudden hammer blows at his heart. The face of Harry the Lynx's companion had until now been hidden by the former's back—but now it stood out, alone, as though it were the only face in all that crowded room.

It was the face of the man with whom he had fought that night in Reddy's old room—the man in whose pocket he had found the card with its cryptic "W. P." scrawled upon it—the man he had left unconscious there on the floor.

He fought for composure, affecting an air of nonchalance, as he strolled over to the other table. There was no question in his mind now but that Dolaire's presence here was known to the Mask. He had hoped for a break, hoped that he would be able to "ticket" whoever might make a move against Dolaire; but he had not dared to hope for a wide-open break like this.

Here was a man that, whether any move were made against Dolaire tonight or not, he knew definitely was one of the Mask's trusted tools. Was Harry the Lynx another? Almost certainly! Otherwise he would not be at the same table—watching Dolaire. But if Dolaire was, say, to be put on the spot here tonight by these two and possibly others, why was Colin invited to their table? He did not know. But, whatever the reason, nothing would have deterred him now.

"Hello, Clarke!" Harry the Lynx greeted heartily. "Meet my friend Benny Malone. You're never talking to the wrong one when you're talking to Benny."

Colin extended his hand. "Glad to know you," said Benny Malone cordially, as he pulled out a chair. "Sit down. Harry was telling me about you."

Colin sat down in the chair indicated. It placed him with his back to the entrance, and his back to Dolaire—but he was no longer interested in watching Dolaire. His interest was centered now in Benny Malone and Harry the Lynx, the two men between whom he sat.

"SURE!" he said pleasantly. "Harry and I have met up a lot. What'll you have?"

"Nix!" Benny Malone laughed strangely. "There's enough here to last as long as we'll want it. I guess—there's another glass for you. Help yourself. Let's talk—quick. Harry says you're from Boston, and that you've pulled a few deals with Papa Goyette—and that you had to blow out of Beantown 'cause the pussy-foots were getting curious."

Colin poured out a glass of wine for himself. "Harry said a mouthful," he stated laconically. "That's right, all right."

"Working any racket now?"

"None."

"How's funds?"

Colin shrugged his shoulders.

"The last handout I got from Papa Goyette," he grinned philosophically, "is getting down to a thin layer."

"Looking for something?"

"The wadding's out of my ears."

"Okay. Suppose I could let you in on something where your cut would be a grand or maybe more, what would you say?"

"I'd say—Colin's voice held an eager note—"that you were kidding."

Benny Malone leaned across the table. "I'm not kidding if you're there with the guts"—he was speaking more hurriedly than ever, and in an undertone now. "Maybe you'll get a chance to prove whether you've got 'em or not in the next few minutes. Harry spotted you over there, and said you'd keep your face closed anyway. He's in a jam, and we may need help. What do you say? Are you sitting in, or do you want to fade?"

Fade—and lose the promised chance of future intimacy with Benny Malone! Colin was thinking in high. He did not know what this "jam" was that Harry the Lynx was in, or what his, Colin's, participation therein might mean, though he was uncomfortably aware that he did not like the sound of it at all—but there was only one answer.

There was no apparent hesitation in his reply.

"Deal the cards," he said, with a convincingly twisted smile. "I'm sitting in."

"Attabo!" applauded Harry the Lynx. "I ain't going to forget this, Clarke, and—"

"Jeeze!" interrupted Benny Malone in a fierce whisper. "There he is now, and it looks like he's got two or three with him. And he's got you lapped, Harry. Well, here's where Spinelli gets the tip to put the lights out." He pulled an automatic stealthily from his pocket. "Keep your feet out of the way, Clarke," he warned—and fired three shots in rapid succession under the table into the floor.

Women's screams, the scraping of chairs as both men and women rose in frantic haste from the tables, and a babel of panicky voices answered the shots.

AND then, almost on the instant, the lights went out.

"Scram, Harry!" snapped Benny Malone. "Spinelli's on the job, all right. Here's your chance. You know the way. Take the first train out of the burg. Clarke and I'll entertain 'em long enough to let you make your getaway." And then, with a short laugh: "Look out for yourself, Clarke! Behind you! Stop him—but keep your rod parked."

It had all happened, it seemed to Colin, in no more time than it had taken him to gain his feet. He whirled around. Someone, a black bulk out of the surrounding darkness, was rushing upon him.

He caught a blur of lighter color—the face. And at that face he whipped out with his right, driving home an uppercut with all his strength behind the blow. But the blow, though it reached its objective, did not stop the impetus of the other's rush, which drove him back against the table, where, losing his balance, he fell to the floor, his opponent on top of him.

And then, as he grappled with the other, he felt a gun in the man's hand. But the other did not grapple in return—he was only a dead weight. Colin snatched the gun away and stood up.

It was a lucky knockout, that was all; but—be smiled grimly—the gun was safer, from his standpoint, in his possession than in the other's! One sometimes did not take even the count of ten!

Pandemonium reigned around him, hysterical cries, a bedlam of noise; but he could see a little better now that his eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness. A furious struggle was going on a few feet away—the swaying forms of two men. One of them, of course, was Benny Malone. He could not tell one from the other; but, as he sprang forward in that direction, one of the two forms crashed with a heavy thud to the floor—and then he heard Benny's vicious challenge:

"Who's that?"

"It's all right," Colin answered. "My guy's asleep."

"Good boy!" approved Benny Malone hurriedly. "I had to plug mine with the butt. I guess there were only two, after all. Come on, bent it! I'll show you the way."

But what the "way" was, Colin never knew—except that there were numerous doors and passages through which he was guided with Benny Malone's hand on his arm until they came out on an alleyway and from there, presently, reached Fifth Avenue. And then, turning down a cross street, Benny Malone spoke for the first time as he slowed his pace to a leisurely stroll.

"That was a swell piece of work you did tonight, kid," he said enthusiastically. "And, take it from me, you ain't going to lose by it."

(Copyright 1933, Frank L. Packard)

Tomorrow, Colin learns he has knocked out a friend.

# CCC CONTINUANCE PLANS ARE DRAWN

WASHINGTON, Sept. 2.—(AP)—The war department moved today to

effect the president's plan for continuing the civilian conservation corps another six months.

All members will be discharged between September 30, and October 15, but can re-enroll for another half year period.

"The strength of the corps of the second period will be brought up to 300,000 men as rapidly as possible and well before Christmas," the de-

partment said, adding that the labor department and veterans administration are beginning selection of 25 per cent of the original state quotas from whom men to replace losses due to discharge will be chosen.

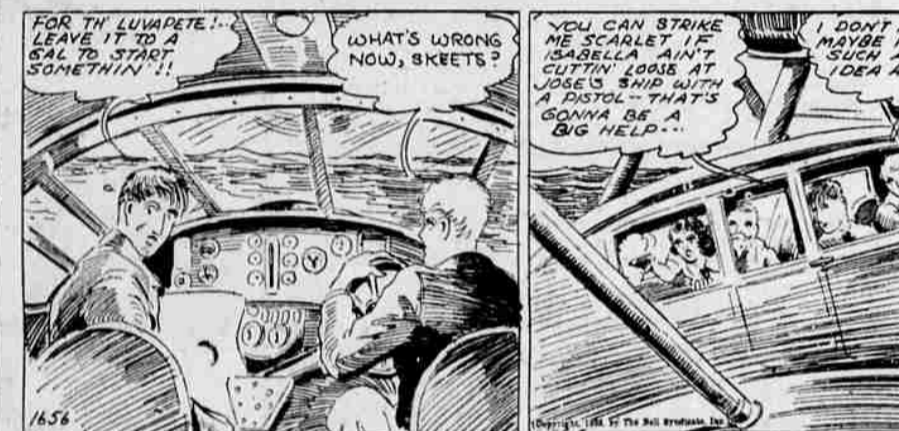
In preparation for winter activities, some units will be shifted and semi-permanent shelters erected. Some units will be moved to the Tennessee valley project.

# S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



# TAILSPIN TOMMY—Score One For Our Side!



# LUMBER BUSINESS DROPS FOR WEEK

PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 2.—(AP)—New business amounting to 32,788-

000 feet or 8.4 per cent less than the previous week, was reported by the Western Pine association here today for the week ending Aug. 28. The total was about 31 per cent under the 3-year weekly average\*for August. Of 109 reporting mills, 70 were operating.

Shipments for the week were 40,092,000 feet, and production 47,978,000 feet, putting production at 36.9

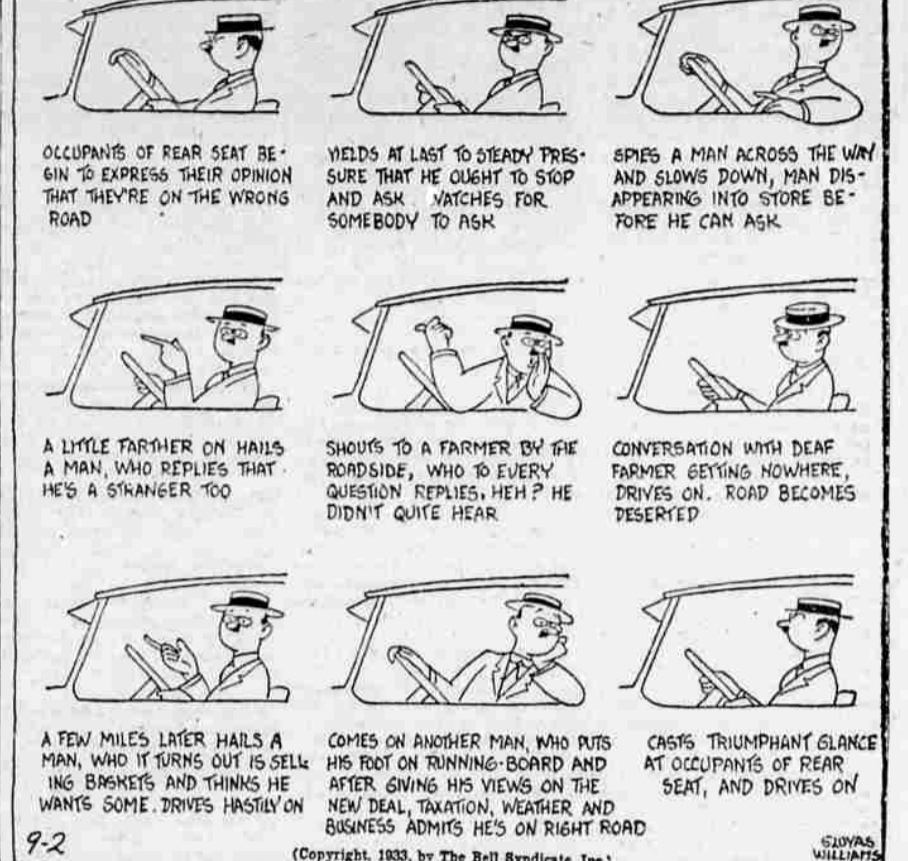
per cent of capacity compared with 35.8 per cent for the previous week, and 20.9 per cent for the year to date.

Current orders were 31 per cent of sawmill capacity.

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# ASKING

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# BOUND TO WIN—No Wedding Bells Yet!

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# THE NEBBS—Fore!

By SOL HESS



# BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



**SURPLUS HOP PICKERS REPORTED DESTITUTE**  
SALEM, Sept. 2.—(AP)—The Marion county court today received a report that 1200 people were in the jungles near East Independence, unable to secure work in the hop fields. Many of the families were said to be practically destitute and without gasoline money to seek work elsewhere.

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