

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

SYNOPSIS: Colin, disguised as a crook, Clarke Lunn, is told by Benny Malone that the man Colin knocked out in Epinephrine club was sergeant's father of the Henchle Squad. Colin hopes to track down the Mask, ruler of New York's underworld, because the Mask has threatened Colin's life. Benny is an agent of the Mask; in return for Colin's help at Epinephrine club he promises to introduce him into the gang which he controls for the Mask. As a preliminary, Colin is sent to have lunch at a certain restaurant.

Chapter 24

A PACKAGE OF W. P.'S

COLIN had obeyed. He had been under observation at the restaurant, that was obvious enough, but he did not know by whom or whether by one or many. Then, later on in the afternoon, Benny Malone had telephoned again, and this time had given him the street and number of a tobacco store where he was to report at half past seven that evening.

If no other customer was in the store at the time, he had been instructed to ask for a package of W. P.'s—otherwise he was to make any purchase he liked that would serve as a pretext for his presence there and wait until he was alone with the proprietor.

Colin's lips compressed on the butt of his cigarette. A package of W. P.'s! The Wine Press! Cap a l'Orange had taught him that! This was more than the thin edge of the wedge—it looked like a wide-flung door with "Welcome" blazoned on the doormat. Or was it the old, old story of the spider and the fly?

It was nearly half-past seven now. He glanced around him. He was approaching an old, elongated, two-story frame building with dormer windows, a relic of New York's early days, that flanked a modern six-story tenement.

It looked as though it had been made over into two houses—at least there were two entrances, one at either end—but, while the one nearer him boasted a narrow porch before its door, the one at the far end seemed to be that of a store, and, judging from the way the house and tenement numbers had been running, it obviously must be the tobacco store he was looking for.

the direction of a door at the of the store beside the telephone booth. "Go on in there. First you come to."

"Thanks," said Colin.

HE CROSSED the store, following the door indicated, and found himself in a narrow passageway. On his left was a closed-in staircase; just a few paces ahead, on his right, was an open door. He reached the latter and paused for an instant on the threshold.

It was quite a sizable room—evidently Mr. Michael Barney's "parlor." Shabby genteel. Knickknacks and china ornaments in profusion, a worn carpet, chairs of the long ago.



It was the store Colin wanted.

HIS glance, apparently casual, was suddenly critical, absorbing details. He was abreast of the porch now. An old, white-haired man, the only person in the neighborhood who, it would seem, did not feel the heat, for he wore a rusty black, shabby Prince Albert coat buttoned tightly around him, sat there on the porch in a rocking chair, a cane across his knees, intent upon a newspaper which he was reading through steel-rimmed spectacles that straggled far down his nose.

The man did not look up as Colin passed by. Colin did not alter his pace. A curious place, this! Besides the two entrances he had already noted, there was also a third one he now saw, 'n about the center of the building—a basement entrance from the sidewalk.

This was wide open, and over the head of the doorway at the bottom of the steps there was a "Shoes to Mend" sign. The obvious questions flashed into his mind. If this was the Wine Press, was the cobbler down there a factor—also the old man on the porch?

He halted now in front of the store. The window display had a cheap appearance. White-painted lettering on the panes, the paint scarcely discernible on many a letter, proclaimed the fact that one Michael Barney dealt in cigars, cigarettes, pipes, and tobacco.

It was the store he was looking for undoubtedly—and through the window Colin could see that there was no one inside at the moment except a wisened little man with red hair who stood behind one of the counters.

Colin mounted the three steps from the sidewalk, opened the door, entered, and shut the door behind him. It was a small place. Prosperity did not seem to lurk in the seedy showcases or on the none too generously stocked shelves. There was a public telephone booth in one corner at the rear. Colin nodded pleasantly. The man with the red hair was looking at him inquiringly from across the counter.

"I'd like a package of W. P.'s," Colin requested.

The man nodded in return.

"You're Clarke Lunn, ain't you?"

"Yes," said Colin.

"I'm Barney," announced the other. "It's all right. I've been looking for you." He jerked his head in

plush-upholstered, the plush faded and colorless, a horsehair sofa—and on the sofa, sprawled at full length, was Benny Malone.

"Hello, Clarke!" Benny Malone called out with a grin. "We meet again. How'd'ya like your lunch?"

Colin grinned back.

"You're all to the good, Benny. I was getting the once-over, eh?"

"Sure! I'll say you were! But the gate's wide open for you now. Sit down but leave the door open. Some of the boys are blowing in by and by. Sorry I can't flash a drink," he drooped an eyelid—"but this dump is on the level. Booze, cards, and skirts is ruled out.

"Mr. and Mrs. Barney are just a quiet old pair—got a bedroom where they sleep, and a kitchen where they cook and eat, just behind here along the hall, and a couple of rooms upstairs just because they're there, that they rent sometimes to roomers. There ain't much dough in running a tobacco emporium in these parts. Poor but honest, get me? The pastor of their church comes around regular to see 'em—the cops gave that up long ago!"

Colin slumped down in a chair.

"You mean they're in the know?" he inquired.

Benny Malone laughed.

"What d'ye think! Just as much as I am—or you ever will be unless you get picked out for one of the Mask's big shots. They're undercover stuff."

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Colin gets "the low down," tomorrow, from Benny.

ROLPH RESTING EASIER, REPORT

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 5.—(AP)—Governor James Rolph, Jr., of California, seriously ill with pneumonia at St. Francis hospital here, was reported "resting easier" today.

The governor, who celebrated his sixty-fourth birthday recently, slept during the night and his temperature which had been as high as 105½, was reported at 101 in a bulletin at 12:30 a. m. Earlier in the night it had dropped to 100.

Physicians remained in constant attendance at the bedside and bulletins were issued every few hours detailing the progress of his fight against the disease.

SEATTLE, Sept. 5.—(AP)—Mark Reed, well-known lumberman and former political power in this state, died here today, following a long illness and an operation performed several days ago.

GUM SLOT MACHINES ALSO HELD ILLEGAL

SALEM, Sept. 5.—(AP)—Mint and gum slot machines, substituted for

pure chance machines, will be confiscated in Marion county, Sheriff A. C. Burk announced today. He stated the district attorney had declared these machines as illegal as those of the older device, upon which a campaign had just been made.

Owners of these machines indicated they might invite a test case to determine the status of the devices, but the sheriff stated he would not

wait for a case before renewing the campaign.

SALEM, Sept. 5.—(AP)—Mrs. B. F. Charboneau, Portland, was taken to the hospital last night with serious injuries as the result of an automobile accident near Woodburn. Her condition today was declared unchanged, but the extent of her injuries had not yet been ascertained.

'SMATTER POP—

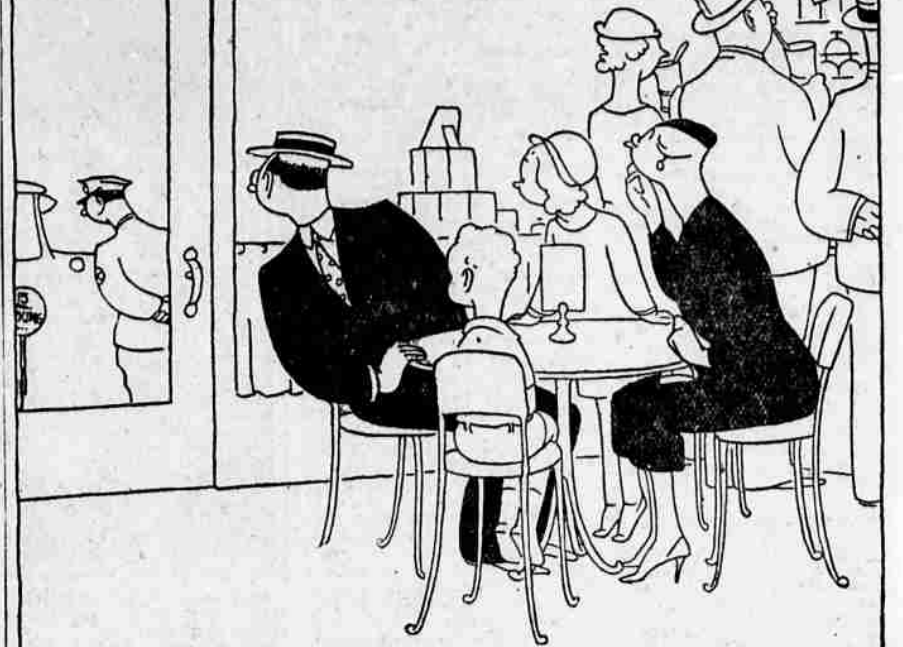
By C. M. PAYNE



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DIFFICULT DECISIONS

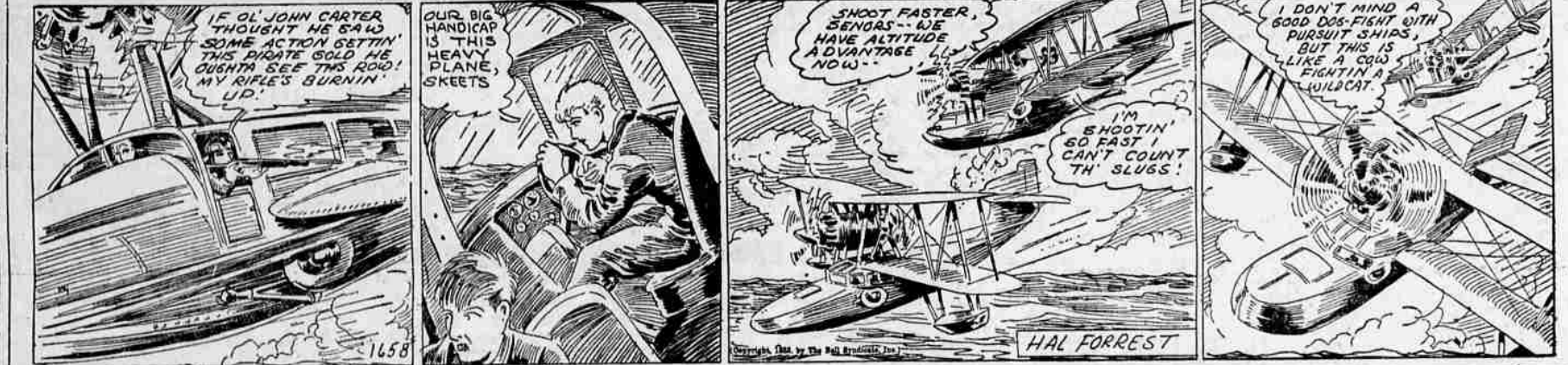
By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



AFTER A LONG WAIT IN A CROWDED DRUG STORE YOU FINALLY GET YOUR ORDER PLACED, AND JUST WHEN IT'S TOO LATE TO COUNTERMAND IT, NOTICE THE TRAFFIC OFFICER BECOMING ACTIVELY INTERESTED IN YOUR CAR.

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—What Price Pirate Treasure



By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST

BOUND TO WIN—Lotta's Promise

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Look Who's Here

By SOL HESS



HOP YARD AGITATOR AGAIN IN CUSTODY

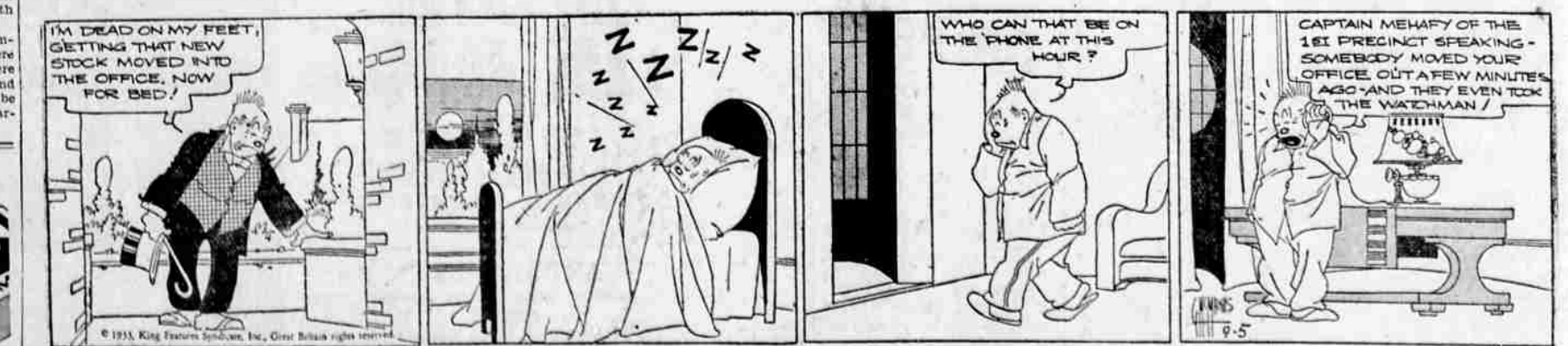
SALEM, Sept. 5.—(AP)—Allison A. Bristol, Eugene, who a few days ago was released on bail after his arrest for agitating hop pickers, was again

in the county jail today on the same charge. With two other alleged agitators, he was arrested by Sheriff A. C. Burk as he began speaking at the Jerman yards north of Salem, early last night.

Joe Sigurt and G. I. Wilson, claiming they were from Portland, were held with Bristol. All three were booked on charges of vagrancy and disturbing the peace. All will be taken to Woodburn today for hearings.

BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



JOIN UP!
WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT GUM
THE PERFECT GUM

WE DO OUR PART

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