

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

SYNOPSIS: After weeks of searching about New York's underworld, a crook, Colin Heitz, has lost his job. He is on the trail of the Mask, his quarry. The Mask has threatened Colin's life; now Colin suddenly finds himself a member of one of the Mask's gangs. Benny Malone, in a room behind a little East Side tobacco shop, is instructing him in the layout. He will work under a man known as Buck, one of the Mask's lieutenants. Benny describes the "Wise Press," formerly a come-on joint for slumming parties, now being used as headquarters for the Mask, and tells of the owner of the Wise Press, Keppelstein.

Chapter 24

PLEASANT PROSPECT

"If you saw anybody on the porch," said Benny Malone with a malicious grin, "it was old Keppelstein and nobody else, because he lives there all by his lonesome, and he's too much of a miser to let anyone else sit in one of his chairs without paying for it!"

Colin looked puzzled. "You don't mean that he's in on—?" "Him!" ejaculated Benny Malone. "Not! He's as dirty a crook as there is in New York—but he ain't our kind of crook. He'd slap a court order on your false teeth if you owed him money."

"The only thing he's in on here is his rent—and he comes around to get it from Barney before breakfast the first of every month. He owns a lot of property and is worth a lot of money, but nobody ever knows him to blow any of it—even on himself!"

"Some day, if he lives long enough, somebody'll bump him off. I'd take the job on myself and enjoy it. He put a widow and three kids that lived in a tenement he owns in the next block out on the street in a hall of a storm a couple of days ago. What do you know about that? But," Benny Malone admitted grudgingly, "he makes a hot blind for us here just the same."

"I get you," laughed Colin. "Say, I feel like a kid at school putting his hand up. What else have I got to learn?"

"How to get in and how to get out—and that you're never to come here unless you're sent for," returned Benny Malone. "And get that last good and hard, Clarkie! This ain't any clubhouse, and there ain't any loading done around here."

"Mr. and Mrs. Barney are supposed to be respectable. See? Only the big shots like Buck O'Mara and Helmie Schwarm come here when they like, and sometimes when there's a big job on one of two of them sleep here—being the roomers I was telling you about that the Barneys sometimes take in."

"The rest of us aren't here more'n once a week, and sometimes not for two or three weeks—only when we're wanted. And when you're wanted you'll get a card with W. P. on it and the hour, or else the same thing over the phone. Savvy?"

Colin licked his lips greedily. "I'm sucking it in," he said.

"WELL, then," said Benny Malone, "listen to the last about. If you have to show up here in daylight use the store, or else go down and see if Solly's got your shoes mended yet. Switch about, shuffle your cards—see?"

"If it's dark there's another way in. Duck into the alleyway alongside here and then around into the lane. There's a door there that opens off this lower hall. It's got a latch. Lift the latch and you'll find the head of a nail—only it's a push button. Push it once, wait a second, then push it twice—two quick ones—and one of the Barneys will let you in."

"There's another door there, a little farther away from the alleyway, but don't monkey with that. It leads to the back stairs, and the big shots are the only ones that have got keys to it. There ain't anything else that—"

A form bulked suddenly in the doorway and a man came into the room. Benny Malone, as master of ceremonies, performed the introduction. The man's name was Kiengell. At intervals of some few minutes two more men appeared—stocky chaps like the first, with weather-beaten faces. Again Benny Malone went through the rites. The last came answered respectively to the names of Smudge Kilrea and Geordie Napp.

"Helmie Schwarm's right-handers," Benny Malone announced for Colin's benefit. "Clarkie here is a new one. Any more to come?"

No one in particular being addressed, the man who had been introduced as Smudge Kilrea answered.

"Nope!" he said. "Three of the feet'll be all that's needed. But where's Buck?"

"Here!" said a voice earthily from the doorway.

Colin looked up. A sandy-haired man, with thick, bushy, sandy eyebrows, and a tight, determined mouth, met his gaze—and the mouth suddenly relaxed into a not unpleasant smile.

"Hello, Clarkie," Buck O'Mara lunged out. "I hear you've joined up. We'll get to know each other better." He looked around the room. "All set, eh?—except that I haven't heard from Helmie. Do any of you know whether he's been in?"

Benny Malone dragged from his pocket the envelope that Helmie Schwarm had given him.

"Helmie was here a little while ago," he said. "He told me he couldn't wait, but that this was the dope you wanted and I was to give it to you."

Buck O'Mara tore the envelope open, extracted a sheet of paper, and studied the latter attentively for a full minute—then he broke into a grim laugh.

"Some boy, Helmie!" he exclaimed. "It looks like the goods to me—but you three birds ought to know. What do you say?"

He handed the sheet of paper to Smudge Kilrea, who studied it in turn, while Kiengell and Geordie Napp peered over Kilrea's shoulder. "Okay by me," stated Smudge Kilrea tersely. "A blind man could find it!"

"Same here," said Kiengell. "Me too," said Geordie Napp. "All right, then," said Buck O'Mara briskly. "Scatter! The rest is all fixed. We'll be right on your tails. And tomorrow night show up here around ten, you three—I'll be here and there'll be a cut for you to take to the boys no matter what happens tonight!"

The three left the room.

BUCK O'MARA turned to Colin. "Ever read the papers, Clarkie?" he inquired abruptly.

"Parts of 'em," Colin admitted with a grin; "but I pass up the eye-wash and the noise the managerie that's in politics make."

"Ever read about a mob a few weeks ago that was doing a nice quiet little business down on the St. Lawrence turning out the queer?"

Colin's face was instantly intent. "Sure!" he said. "Everybody's read about that. Somebody muscled in and put two of 'em on the spot."

Buck O'Mara barked out a laugh. "And then some!" he said thinly. "The papers don't know it all. Besides the two, there was another one that got a hide full of lead and had a tough break between trying to get well and keeping under cover at the same time. And also there ain't any nice little business down there any more."

There was only one man that Buck O'Mara could be talking about—Lazarre. Lazarre had pulled through and was alive, then! Colin rummaged for a match as he hung a fresh cigarette on his lip.

He stared inquiringly, a little bewilderedly, at Buck O'Mara.

"I'm not sure I get you," he said. "What are you asking me if I'd read about that?"

Buck O'Mara laughed, but went on without answering.

"This guy that almost got the works happens to be a good friend of somebody important around here, see? He knew all about that St. Lawrence country, and a lot more as well. And that little business up there—that was important to this same somebody."

Buck borrowed a light. Colin was fascinated by Buck's cold, precise movements, and with his own knowledge of what actually happened on the St. Lawrence, had pieced together a far more complete version of the story than Buck was likely to tell him.

"So, these guys being friends, we took pains to find out who did it. I thought you'd like to know that anyone you use your rod on tonight, and you'll have plenty of use for it, is only getting what he asked for. Come on, let's go."

(Copyright, 1933, Frank L. Packard)

Colin's career of "normal" takes him on the high seas, Monday.

NO FAT OF LAND FOR NEEDY FOLK

WASHINGTON, Sept. 7.—(AP)—Harry L. Hopkins, federal emergency relief administrator, today told a press conference the "whole picture of the unemployment situation from top to bottom shows inadequate relief."

Releasing figures showing a drop of 8.2 per cent in the number of families depending on public relief and a decline of 10.8 per cent in the amount of money spent in July compared with June, Hopkins said

this meant "the people in need are not living off the fat of the land through relief."

He added the government was "putting up from 55 to 60 per cent of the relief money now and if the 'adequacy business' is stepped up as it should be, it's going to cost us a lot more money."

O. E. Rose for Elbertas.

COAST BUILDING SHOWS BIG GAIN

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 7.—(AP)—Building permits in 66 Pacific coast

cities totaled \$5,310,508 in August, a gain of 26.6 per cent over August last year. H. R. Baker & Co., reported today.

Seventeen cities recorded gains over both August last year and July this year. Normally there is a moderate decline in building permits in August from July.

The 26 leading cities issued permits totaling \$4,935,536 in August,

compared with \$5,070,778 in July and \$3,299,682 in August, 1932.

Cleaning and Pressing, the Camelo serves you right. Free delivery. Tel. 1280. Members N.R.A.

Phone 542. We'll haul away your refuse. City Sanitary Service.

See E. Rose for Elbertas.

S'MATTER POP—

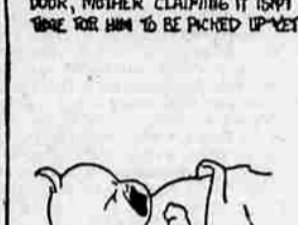
By C. M. PAYNE



(Copyright, 1933, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

NAP TIME

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



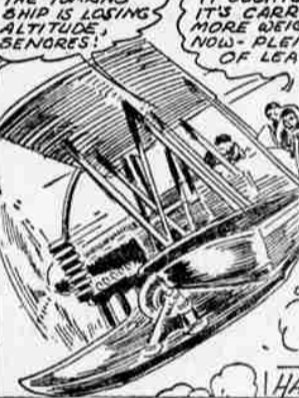
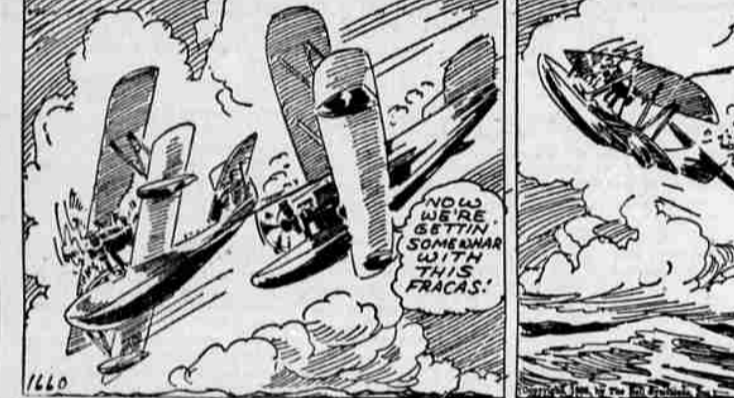
GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Copyright, 1933, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

9-7

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Treasure Ship Is Crippled

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Ben's Grand Idea!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Who's Who

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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

WOMAN SAVED AFTER TUMBLE FROM DOCK

PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 7.—(AP)—The speedy response of a young boatswain and an elderly dock construction superintendent averted what might have been a tragedy yesterday when one of the women working the liner General Pershing off

fell from the dock here. Mrs. Russell Smith of Portland was waving goodbye to friends aboard just as the liner was making ready to leave. She lost her balance and plunged into the water several feet below, narrowly missing a string of logs. J. Miller, boatswain of the General Pershing, and O. Reid, construction superintendent at the dock, plunged quickly to Mrs. Smith's rescue, and shortly had her aboard the ship.

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.