

# The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

**SYNOPSIS:** After weeks of trailing through the New York underworld disguised as Charlie Lewis, a crook, Colin Heilmie finds himself, by a lucky chance, a member of one of the gangs whose master is the Mask. And it was the Mask Colin was searching for because it was the Mask who had threatened the author's life. With Buck O'Mara, head of the gang, and Benny Malone, Colin just has boarded the schooner of one Dollaire, run runner, who is to be put on the spot. Not a nice situation for a respectable writer. Colin muses as Buck begins to speak.

**Chapter 29**  
**DOLLAIRE'S TRICK**  
BUCK O'MARA was shaking hands with someone—and then Colin heard him speak:  
"I'm Buck O'Mara. Heilmie sent me. You're Dollaire, of course. Glad to know you."  
"Me? Sure, I'm Dollaire!" There was a tinge of boastfulness in the other's voice. "So Heilmie, he's not here, eh? He said maybe he'd come out."

"Heilmie—out here!" Buck O'Mara laughed derisively. "He must have been corned to the toes if he said that. He doesn't take any chances of getting his feet wet, or getting peeped by the revenue men any more. He don't have to, Heilmie's big business now and nothing else."  
"Well, me," said Dollaire, "I don't give a damn about that. But maybe he sent something else besides you, eh? That was the bargain. What you call it—spot cash before a case she's go over the side. Yes?"

"I've got it here," Buck O'Mara patted his pocket. "I suppose you'll want to count it. If you do, we'd better go down to your cabin, hadn't we? You can't count it in the dark."  
"You bet you want to count it," Dollaire asserted bluntly. "Do you think, me, I am foolish? Heilmie, maybe he is all right, but the money, she is talk."  
"Got your fingers crossed, eh?" Buck O'Mara inquired jestingly. "Well, lead on. We're wasting time. The boy'll probably have to make more than one trip tonight to land everything that Heilmie said you told him was aboard. And, say, Dollaire, that goes the other way too—we're counting the cases as we get them. Fair enough, eh?"

"That part, she's all right," granted Dollaire. "Come on!"  
Dollaire, followed by Buck O'Mara with Benny Malone and Colin trailing behind, led the way aft.  
Benny Malone's elbow prodded Colin's side.  
"Keep your rod handy," whispered Benny Malone. "You're going to see something, Clarke, take it from me—you're going to see that big stiff down on his knees and the sweat pouring out of him like he was a hydrant. And when they hear a shot from the cabin the boys'll pile aboard and mop up the rest."  
But the sweat at the moment was on Colin's brow—not on Dollaire's. In the darkness he wiped it away with a sweep of his sleeve. His feet seemed unsteady—perhaps it was the rise and fall of the deck as the vessel rode the swells.

The chattering voices around him became the screams and yells and shrieks of doomed men—the forms he saw lining the rail and the figures that flitted here and there about the deck were but wraiths returned to gibber and haunt the schooner, which once, in their earthly existence, had been their habitat.

AND there was no single thing that he could do, no warning he could give that would have any effect other than to precipitate the impending holocaust and bring about his own destruction as well.  
"That goes by me!" Unbelievably it was his own voice speaking—calmly—with even a jeer in it. "It's coming to him, isn't it?"  
"Clarke," said Benny Malone open-heartedly, "you're the real goods. I wish you and me had met up before. Now watch your step, or you'll bust your neck."  
The advice was not ill-timed. The descent to the cabin was by way of a short, steep, ladder-like companionway. Colin, bringing up the rear, negotiated it—and stood in the cabin itself.

He flung a swift, comprehensive glance around him.  
The cabin was not elaborate, nor was it large. Running fore and aft, a bunk was on one side, a settee of sorts, with torn covering, on the other. A swinging oil lamp, lighted, hung low over a table in the center. A small safe stood against the after bulkhead.  
There were two chairs, one on

each side of the table—and, flanking the companionway, a locker, whose top appeared to be a catch-all for everything from nautical instruments and charts to bottles and glasses.

Dollaire waved his hand toward the locker.  
"Help yourselves," he invited with a grin; "and then you tell Heilmie how many bottles he can make out of one, with the kick she's still there! By gar! Me, sometimes I think I will do that like you fellows before I leave St. Pierre."  
"Thanks!" said Buck O'Mara—and, pouring out a stiff portion, downed it at a gulp.

Benny Malone did likewise.  
The bottle was steady in Colin's hand as he poured for himself. Queer! They were going to kill Dollaire in here. And his, Colin's, hand was steady. The fiery three-fingers was like so much water.  
Dollaire took one of the chairs. Buck O'Mara took the other, facing Dollaire across the table. Colin, obedient to a nudge, slumped down beside Benny Malone on the settee behind Buck O'Mara. Benny Malone's hand was thrust negligently into the side pocket of his coat. Dollaire was in full view from the settee.

"Buck O'Mara tossed a rubber-banded pile of crisp new bills down on the table in front of Dollaire.  
"Here's the dough," he said. "Go ahead and count it."  
Dollaire reached for the money greedily, ripped off the rubber band, and began to count. He counted laboriously, steadily, wetting his forefinger on his tongue. At the end he snapped the rubber band back into place around the bills.  
"She's right!" he announced. "And Heilmie, he's all right, too. I put this in the safe. Yes? Then we all have another little drink, eh?"

"I'm glad you're satisfied"—there was a purr in Buck O'Mara's voice. "We wouldn't like you to feel when you're sitting in with our outfit that we'd hold anything out on you, or that you're not getting all that's coming to you."  
"Sure, I'm satisfied," grinned Dollaire as he stood up, moved over to the safe and swung its door open.  
"Sure, I'm satisfied!" he swung suddenly around, a revolver in his hand, his face working with fury, his voice a snarl—"I'm satisfied, by God, it is a trick. You move—one of you three—and I shoot. This money—I got lots like this. I know where she come from. She's counterfeit!"

NO one moved. The metamorphosis had been dynamic, almost instantaneous. In the fraction of a second, Dollaire, the condemned, had become Dollaire, the executioner. Dollaire, behind that ugly, unwavering muzzle, held the whip hand—and Dollaire would not have the slightest qualm about using it.  
And then Buck O'Mara spoke.  
"Aw, snap out of it!" he retorted coolly, contemptuously. "You sound like you'd got a leak in your dome cover. If you think there's anything phony about that dough, slip it back to me quick, boy, for, say, I can use it, believe me. Counterfeit hell! It's a good lot's worth a rake-off where you come from anyhow. What's the matter with you? Have you gone crazy—or what?"

It was an about face—and Colin, listening, as he stared at the revolver muzzle in Dollaire's hand, did not need to be told that Buck O'Mara had no other chance, no other play to make. Counterfeit money! So that was it. It seemed as though he could see again Dollaire's attack upon the club. It seemed as though he could hear, from out of nowhere, the Mask's burst of laughter as he had conceived this ironic bit of by-play.  
But now! Buck O'Mara perhaps had not expected that the spurious money would be recognized at once, and possibly not at all, in which latter case he had obviously intended to taunt Dollaire with it in the end. On the other hand, should Dollaire recognize it of his own accord, O'Mara had undoubtedly expected some sign of the fact, and had intended to act accordingly the moment the sign came. Buck could not have guessed Dollaire's cunning, or have anticipated the lightning change that came as he turned back to the room from the safe.

There was Dollaire's gun, and there sat his three visitors.  
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Tomorrow action comes aboard the Alouette.

# POOR LO ON BYRD SOUTH POLE TRIP

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J., Sept. 11.—(AP)—When Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd sails from Boston September 25 on his second expedition into the Antarctic a full blooded Indian will be included in his party.

The Indian, who may be the first of his race to see the south pole, is chief of the Winnebago tribe of Iowa, whose name was recommended by Columbia University. A graduate of Carlisle Indian school, Lebanon Valley college, and Penn State, Chief Winneshiek is a lecturer, a chemist, and metallurgist, a Boy Scout official, the author of two books on scouting, and an accomplished musician.

He spent the summer playing in an Indian band on a local amusement pier.

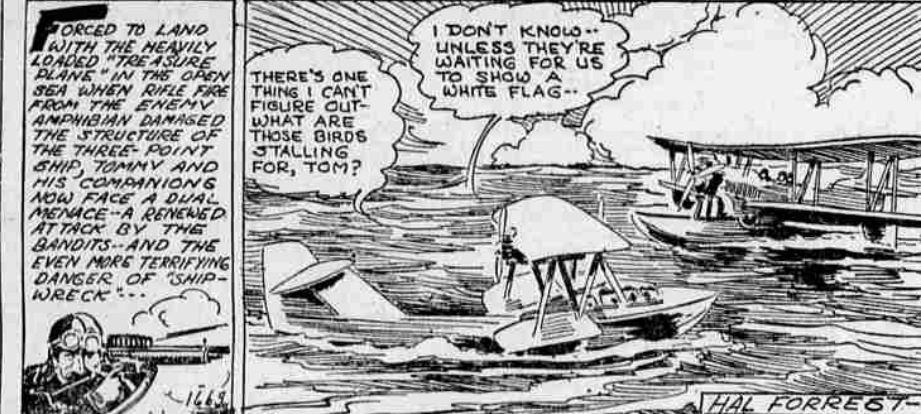
# S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



# TAILSPIN TOMMY—Isabella Is Defiant!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



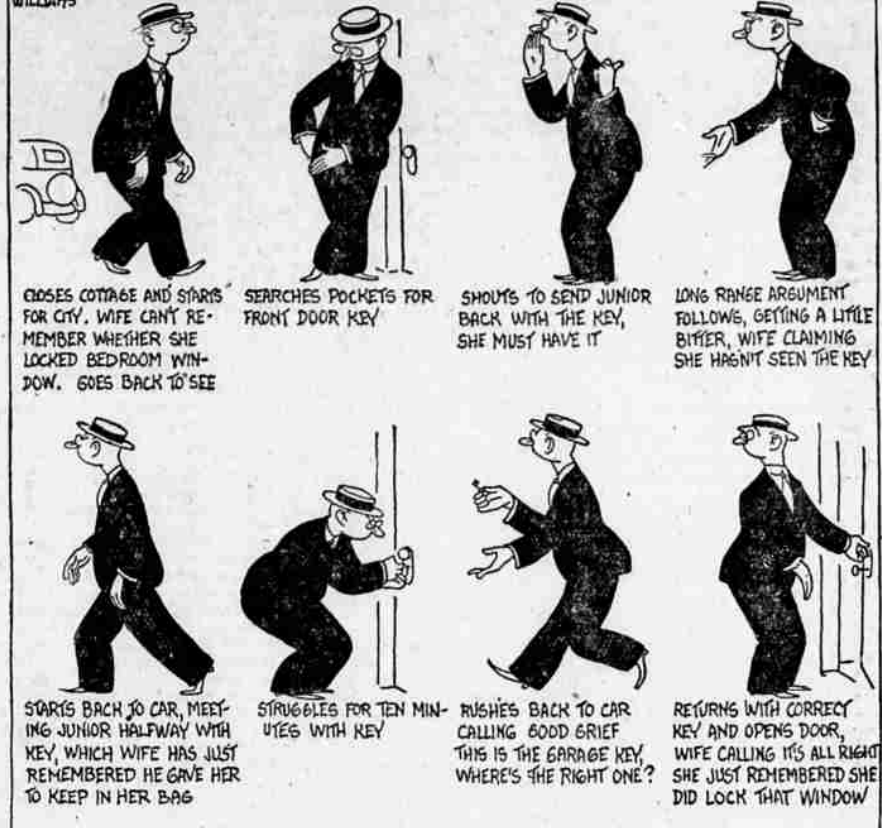
# TOLEDO FIREBOYS DO UNIQUE JOBS

TOLEDO, Ore., Sept. 11.—(AP) Fire-

men of the local department have discovered a new use for their pumping engine during the past week, other than that of pumping water onto fires. The newest use is still the pumping of water, but under entirely different circumstances.  
Earlier in the week, the department was called out and pumped water from the top of a building. The water, from a recent rain, was three feet deep and was threatening the collapse of the building roof.  
Yesterday, another call came. This time it was the ocean-going tug, the Mirene of Vancouver, Wash., which was in danger of sinking. The engine pulled onto the dock and after hoses were attached pumped the vessel dry enough so that her own pumps could be used.

# KEY TROUBLE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



# BOUND TO WIN—Everybody's Party

By EDWIN ALGER



# THE NEBBS—And That's That

By SOL HESS



# BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



**Nudity No Crime**  
ALLEGAN, Mich., Sept. 11.—(AP)—Warrants charging 23 persons with indecent exposure in connection with the operation of a nudist colony near here were dismissed today and new warrants charging only Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Ring with the same offense as proprietors of the colony were substituted.

**French Wheat Yield**  
PARIS, Sept. 11.—(AP) The second consecutive bumper French wheat crop was officially estimated today by the ministry of agriculture at 341,000,000 bushels. This leaves an expected surplus of 39,000,000 bushels of which the ministry hopes to export 7,240,000.

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