

The HIDDEN DOOR

BY FRANK L. PACKARD

Chapter 48
THE WHOLE TRUTH

COLIN jerked his hand toward the desk. "The answer's in that letter over there—the one I was to deliver to Joe Lazarre. I opened it when I got back here tonight. It's rather longish, as you see, but it cleans up pretty well everything, and if you want to read it for yourself go ahead. Otherwise I'll give you the gist of it in a few words."

"I don't want to read it now," Sergeant Mulvey answered. "I'm too tired. And I've got a few things to say myself. So skip! All I want to know is what made Reddy think it was the Mask who bumped French Pete and Annie off in the first place and why Reddy supposed that Lazarre had been down on the lower St. Lawrence for a year and what made him think Lazarre was working for the Mask down there."

"It's the code, of course," Colin said. "No help asked or wanted from the police. A rift in a mob is another story. Annie was Reddy's sister, and French Pete was Lazarre's brother. Reddy's idea, in the event of anything happening to him, was to pass on the torch. He believed that Lazarre would turn against the Mask to avenge his brother's murder and the murder of his brother's wife."

"Check!" said Sergeant Mulvey. Colin's brows puckered. "It's a little difficult to iron it all out in its proper sequence," he said, "though Reddy explains everything at length in his letter as though he believed that Lazarre was in ignorance even of the murders themselves."

"That you can readily understand, because it appears from Reddy's letter that Lazarre, as an alibi for himself we can safely say now, dropped out of sight a month or so before French Pete was murdered."

"In other words," observed Sergeant Mulvey, "Reddy went on the assumption that Lazarre knew nothing at all about anything that had happened?"

"Yes," said Colin, "even to the extent of Lazarre being unaware that Reddy knew him to be Louis Mireau, French Pete's brother. French Pete obviously knew it, and he used to take Louis, or Lazarre—we'll call him Lazarre hereafter to avoid confusion—with him frequently to Annie's flat."

"That's how and where, of course, Lazarre's infatuation for Annie began; but with Annie, we may be certain, having none of him, and with French Pete standing always in the road. Well, French Pete naturally enough told Annie, the girl he was going to marry, who Lazarre really was, and in turn Annie confided in Reddy, her brother—all this, apparently, without Lazarre being aware of it."

SERGEANT MULVEY'S eyes were narrow with interest. "Well, go on!" he prompted impatiently. "What did he do?"

"While he was still in stir," Colin went on, "he got tipped off to the men who were in the murder car the night French Pete was put on the spot. And as soon as he got out of his wits with that as a starter. Then overheard conversations brought this mysterious overlord, the Mask, into the picture and definitely linked up the Mask with French Pete's murder and Annie's abduction."

"Also one night he overheard one of these men say that Lazarre was on the Cap & O'Orange job, and from that he concluded that Lazarre likewise was allied with the Mask and assumed that Lazarre had been at Cap & O'Orange all the time since he had left New York."

"That's about all. He ends by giving Lazarre a list of the men he has spotted and putting it up to Lazarre to carry on. I don't know how far he got, but he was a lot farther from the truth than he seemed to think he was, or it is needless to say, he would not have written to Lazarre."

"Somewhere a false step or ill luck exposed him. There's just one thing, though, that I must confess I cannot quite understand."

"What's that?" inquired Sergeant Mulvey.

"Why Louis Mireau assumed the name of Joe Lazarre." Sergeant Mulvey smiled grimly. "I can explain that," he said. "I told you we'd had a pretty busy night of it. That scar on his shoulder started the ball rolling—and identified him down at headquarters. He had

a police record—that's why he didn't have his calling cards engraved with Louis Mireau on them. See?"

"Oh!" Colin nodded. So that's it is it?"

"Yes," said Sergeant Mulvey. "And now listen to what we dug up out of the files. I told you I'd have a word or two to say when my turn came. The Mireau family originally came from somewhere down on the Gulf of St. Lawrence—which probably, later on, gave Lazarre the idea of locating that counterfeit plant there where its isolation made it look sure-fire as far as safety went, and the natural resources made it practical. He's about forty years old. When he was twenty, and that's twenty years ago, he was on the vaudeville stage—and, say, what do you think his 'turn' was? He was one of those lightning-change artists—an impersonator."

"The devil he was!" ejaculated Colin tensely; and then, with a tight smile: "Well, that explains a lot!"

"I'll say it does!" Sergeant Mulvey laughed harshly. "Just about that time, however, he got caught at a pretty dirty bit of blackmailing and forgery and got two years for it. When his term was up he disappeared."

"It must have been around then when he turned himself into Keppelstein and started in on his own private theatricals at the Wine Press, and began to build up his mobs, creating a new big shot out of himself for each one as it came along. He was never heard of again until tonight."

"And it wasn't until about eight years ago, as far as we've been able to check up yet, that even Joe Lazarre appeared on the scene—by which time he figured, I guess, that no one would connect him with Louis Mireau unless he himself went around asking for it. And nobody did, either. So, as I said, when he wasn't playing around as Helme Schwarm and Buck O'Mara and suchlike, he was Joe Lazarre instead of Louis Mireau when his make-up was off. That Keppelstein stunt was a winner."

"He could come and go in any character the next scene called for, and make those hops down the Gulf, obviously inspection trips from 'headquarters,' whenever he liked—though it's open and shut that he always had to go down there as Lazarre on account of it keeping him so long away from his make-up base. But I guess you said it all when you made that crack about him getting to work to show Satan how it was done!"

Colin was staring moodily at the floor. He was silent for a moment; then abruptly:

"Annie was bound to find out the truth, of course, and there's no doubt that's why in the end she was found in the river—but I wonder where he took her? He certainly never lived in a place like the Wine Press. He must have had quarters somewhere."

Sergeant Mulvey shrugged his shoulders. "More than one, probably," he said. "Helme Schwarm, for instance, no doubt had a swell layout somewhere. Anyway, we'll dig that all out in time. We found some addresses and papers tucked away in a drawer of that . . . moving bar, which latter, by the way, according to the suddenly awakened memory of one of the old-timers down at headquarters, turns out to be nothing but another come-on circus stunt that was pulled by the Wine Press to amuse the clientele at the time prohibition was in the air and everybody was talking about it—only there wasn't any wardrobe on the other side of it then!"

"But no matter about that! Besides the addresses, we found a list of the members of a different mob. And—Sergeant Mulvey grinned suddenly—the last name on Buck O'Mara's list was Clarke Linn with an 'O. K.' after it. We've got a dragnet out now—and there ought to be quite a haul by the time we're through."

"Kind of makes the false stuff you've been getting away with in your books look sick, eh?"

CLING PEACH SUIT BRINGS PAYMENTS

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 22—(AP)—The cling peach control committee

announced today canners are speeding their payments to the committee's fund since the federal government took decisive action two days ago to enforce the industry's agreement. Payments have climbed from 85 per cent of the amount due to nearly 90 per cent since action against the Callahan Packers, Inc. was started in federal court. A committee statement said the

government's "firm position" is going a long way toward assuring prompt payment at the agreement price to growers for the surplus No. 1 fruit. The agreement price is \$15 a ton. The home of former Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch, who served under Lincoln, still stands in Port Wayne, Ind.

MONTANA'S GAS PRICE STILL UP

HELENA, Mont., Sept. 22—(AP)—While telegrams and telephone calls

poured into the Montana executive offices today with messages of commendation on Governor Frank H. Cooney's gasoline price reduction ultimatum, the fuel distributors of the state had not as yet reacted to his decree that unless gasoline prices come down he will take official action to force them lower. Unless gasoline prices are "very materially reduced," the governor stated,

Montans will go into the refining and retail business with \$100,000 set aside for that purpose by the last legislature. SALEM, Ore., Sept. 22—(AP)—An enrollment increase of 43 as compared with last year is shown at Willamette university, the registrar's office announced today. Students enrolled numbered 456.

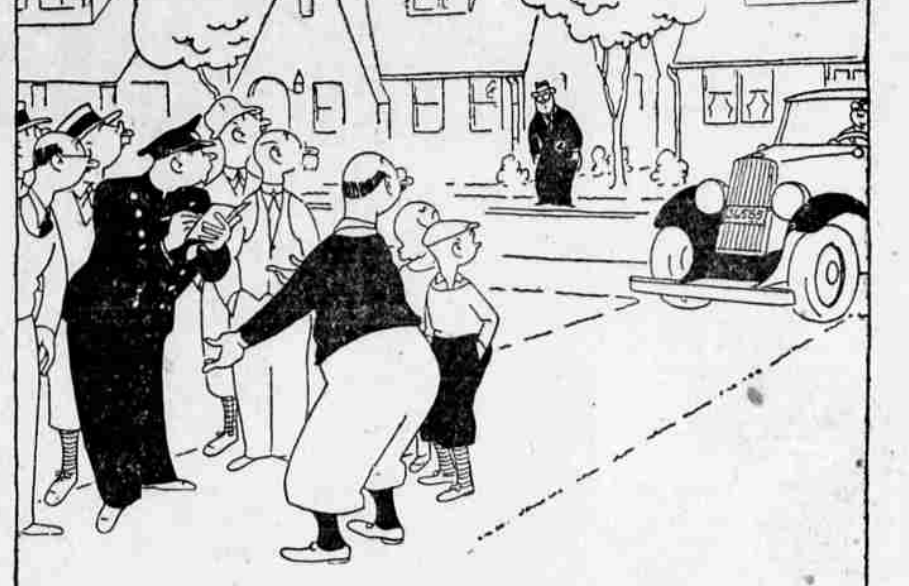
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

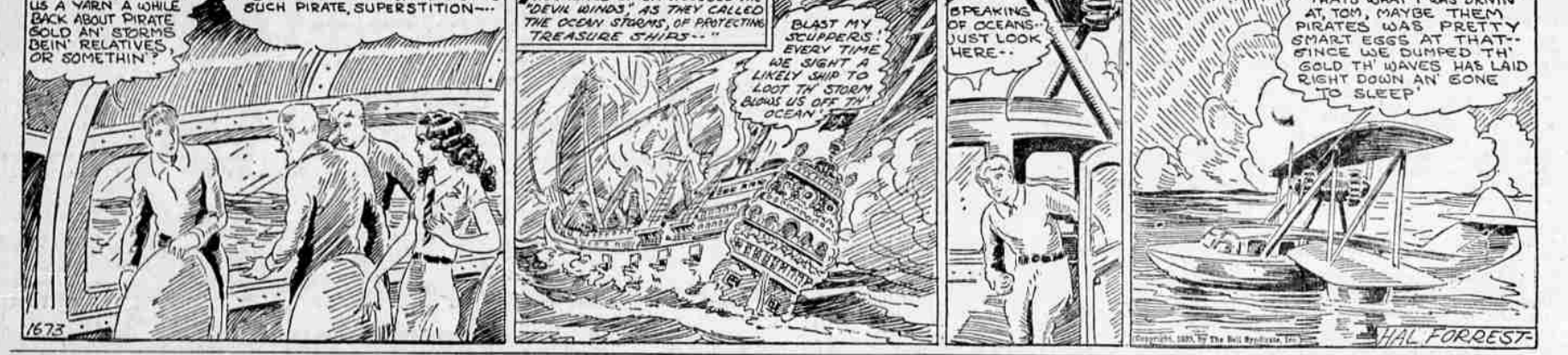
By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



FRED PERLEY HAD JUST FINISHED TELLING THE POLICE AND EXCITED NEIGHBORS HOW HE HAD LEFT HIS CAR, LOCKED, IN THE DRIVEWAY, HAD HEARD THE ENGINE START, AND HAD RUN OUT IN TIME TO SEE IT BEING DRIVEN RAPIDLY ROUND THE CORNER—WHEN MRS. PERLEY DROVE UP PLACIDLY. SHE EXPLAINED THAT, RETURNING FROM NEXT DOOR SHE HAD REMEMBERED AN ERRAND, AND HAVING THE EXTRA KEYS, HAD JUMPED IN AND DRIVEN OFF. FRED IS STILL SULKY

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Still Waters!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Ben Knows It!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—Strike Me Pink

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



COAST GUARD WILL BE STRENGTHENED

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22—(AP)—The public works administration today allotted \$14,800,000 to the coast

guard for a general strengthening of the service. Of this sum \$1,898,000 will be used for the construction of 31 seaplanes. Coast guard officials, the public works administrator stated, "said there will be no decrease in smuggling activities."

A drooping elm at Indianapolis shed all its leaves once this summer and then grew a second crop of foliage.

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