

Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Nesta Riddell tells the men she found in her room the story of how she was married to the Van Berg emeralds, and how she shot Van Berg, Caroline Leigh, and her cousin Jim Riddell, but Nesta keeps them apart. Now Jim, awakened in the night by Nesta's groaning, has entered her room by the door, and she has then determined to "get down to cases" with her. But he still can remember nothing of his past, although he has talked in his sleep of the emeralds.

Chapter 17
AT THE LIBRARY
NESTA looked up at him—a sideways glance, anger in it, and something else.

He said, "How much money have I got?"
"You know what was in your pockets, don't you?"
He said, "No." And then, "But I could easily find out."
"What do you mean?"
"I could ring up the hospital."
A scolding rage swept over Nesta. If she had had anything to strike him with, she would have struck with all her might. She had nothing. She stiffened against the rage, and it went by.

"It would be quite easy to find out," he said; and then, "Do you want me to ring up in the morning?" He laughed a little. "I don't think you do. How much was it? Fifty pounds? He was watching her eyes. "Forty? Thirty? Twenty?"
All the lines showed in her face. "Five—if you must know."
"Five? To take me abroad?"
She laughed harshly.

"You were going to Glasgow—that's as much as you told me. You'd money to splash about as long as I knew you, but you never told me where it came from. If you want to know, you gave me ten pounds when you went away, and said you'd send me some more. And five pounds was what was in your pocket-book. That's straight. And I'm keeping what I've got. You can ring up the hospital if you like."
He thought she was speaking the truth. He said, "I'll take the pocket-book."
Nesta hesitated, made a step towards the door, and turned again. "What do you want it for?"
"It's mine."
"I'm going to bed."
As she passed the threshold, she was aware that he was following her. She swung round angrily. "What do you want?"
"That pocket-book."
"If I say no?"
"I shall come and take it. You'd better hand it over—you haven't got a leg to stand on."
He thought she was going to strike him, but she governed herself. After a moment she spoke.

"You think a lot of yourself—don't you. Suppose I go to the police."
"Suppose you do."
She turned with a jerk and went along the passage and up the stairs. He heard her go into her room, and a minute later he heard her come out again.

He was at the foot of the stairs to meet her. She snapped on the passage light as she came out, and when she saw him she stood still about half way down.

"There's your case!" she said, and threw it at him.

LEDLINGTON has quite a good public library. At a quarter past nine in the morning Jim sat at a solid wooden table and turned over the leaves of a fat pile of newspapers. He had asked for the file of *The Daily Surprise*, because it could be trusted to leave nothing out. Every available detail of the assault on Mr. Van Berg and the theft of the Van Berg emeralds would certainly be found in its columns.

Jim turned the pages. He wasn't quite sure when it had happened. Nesta had been rather vague, perhaps purposely. Ah! Here was a piece about the *Alice Arden*! He had better read it. But it didn't get him anywhere; there was nothing he hadn't gathered from Nesta. He must go back a bit. . . . He came on a headline:

VAN BERG NEAR DEATH
He frowned, hesitated, and went in turning the leaves backwards. Better begin at the beginning. He found it at last, and read, his face hard and expressionless.

The village of Packham, twenty miles from Ledlington, has been the scene of a most amazing crime. Elmer K. Van Berg, commissioner of precious stones, was discovered shortly after midnight in his library at Packham Hall, unconscious. He had been shot at close

range, and it is doubtful whether he will recover.
The room was in perfect order, but the safe in which Mr. Van Berg kept his valuables was unlocked, and a unique chain of emeralds, said to have belonged to the Emperor Atahualpa, last of the Incas, was missing. These emeralds, which had been recently inherited by Mr. Van Berg, are eight in number, perfectly matched, flawless, and of immense value.

Mrs. Van Berg has furnished the police a detailed description of the missing jewels.
Jim ran his eyes rapidly down the column. . . . An interview with the housekeeper at Packham Hall, Miss Caroline Bussell, bricks without straw, Miss Bussell had retired early, and had not known that anything out of the usual was happening until Mrs. Van Berg ran into her room between one and two in the morning and said something dreadful had happened. She then woke the other servants, and when she got downstairs, Mrs. Van Berg had telephoned to the doctor and was ringing up the police.

HE turned to the next day's issue:
WILL MR. VAN BERG RECOVER CONSCIOUSNESS?
This is an all important question, since it is probable that he alone saw his assailant, though it appears that Mrs. Van Berg narrowly missed doing so.
"Elmer always sat up late," Mrs. Van Berg said today, "I would go upstairs and sometimes I would hear him come up, and sometimes I wouldn't hear a thing. Last night I came up as usual at about eleven o'clock, but I couldn't sleep. At twelve I went downstairs to get a book. As I passed the library door I could hear voices. Elmer was talking to someone."
"You didn't go in, Mrs. Van Berg?" asked the examiner.
"Mrs. Van Berg shook her head. She is a platinum blonde with grey eyes and the slimmest of modern figures."
"No, I wish I had! It might have saved my husband's life."
"Were the voices raised? Did it sound as if there was a quarrel?"
Mrs. Van Berg shook her head again. "Oh no—they sounded just ordinary."
"Could you distinguish anything that was said?"
Mrs. Van Berg appeared to hesitate for a moment.
"Oh no—I wasn't listening of course. I just got my book and went upstairs again."
"And then?"
"Oh no—I guess I was drowsy—but all at once I thought I heard a shot."
"How long after you came upstairs?"
"Mrs. Van Berg hesitated again. "I don't know. It seemed to rouse me up."
"And then?"
"I ran downstairs, and as soon as I opened the library door I saw Elmer lying there."
"Oh, it was dreadful!" she said when she could speak again. "I was afraid to touch him. I ran up and called Miss Bussell, and telephoned to the doctor and the police."
"And when did you miss the emeralds?"
"I wasn't thinking about the emeralds—I was thinking about my husband."
"But you must have missed them some time."
"Yes—when the police came and began to ask questions."
"And was anything missing besides the emeralds?"
"There was nothing else there—nothing else of value. My other jewels were up in my room. I was going to wear the emeralds that week, so my husband had got them out of the bank. He always kept them in his own safe when I was going to wear them, because they were so valuable."
"Then it looks as if the thief was acquainted with his habits?"
"Yes, it does."

That was all that really signified, though there was a lot about the emeralds, and the Incas, and the Mr. Van Berg uncle who had started the famous gem collection.

Jim sat staring at the page. Elmer Van Berg had sat talking in his library with the man who had robbed him. He had the odd feeling that he knew Elmer Van Berg, and that what he knew of him made it difficult to believe that he would have engaged in talk at that hour with any chance-comer stranger.

And if he knew Elmer Van Berg, and if it was he who had talked to him in that library at midnight, then there was no question of its being a stranger. And he did know Elmer Van Berg. He knew the way the straight iron-grey thatch of hair stood up above his forehead, the way the shrewd, pleasant eyes looked out under the iron-grey brows.

He had only to shut his eyes to see these things, and the hand and the scar, and the emerald chain dangling from it under the light.

All of a sudden his temples were wet. It was true! He had sat and talked to a man as a friend and shot him down!

It was a lie.
He wiped his forehead. It was a lie, why could he see that hand with the scar, and the emeralds hanging from it?
With a dogged determination he went on reading.

Tomorrow, Jim makes a very important decision.
on lottery charges in connection with the affairs of the Fraternal Order of Eagles, plan an appeal to President Franklin D. Roosevelt in behalf of Mann.
The United States supreme court refused today to review the federal court trial in which Mann, president of the Kansas City chamber of commerce, was fined \$12,000 and sentenced to five months in jail.

COOS BAY MILL CODS PROTESTED

MARSHFIELD, Ore., Oct. 11.—(UP) Seven hundred employees of the Coos

Bay Lumber company wired General Hugh S. Johnson, NRA chairman, protesting enforcement of the lumber code against the firm.
Under terms of the code, through ruling of the West Coast Lumber control boards, the lumber company must cut 20 hours from its 120-hour allotment in October and November, because the concern operated 160 hours in September.

Employees declared in the telegram all 700 would be thrown out of work at the beginning of winter. "We are telegraphing to inquire what provision you have made for the support of ourselves and our families after we are discharged," it said.
Heating costs can be reduced. For complete heating service call Art Schmidt 418-1882.

COUNTY COUNCILS FOR BUYING DRIVE

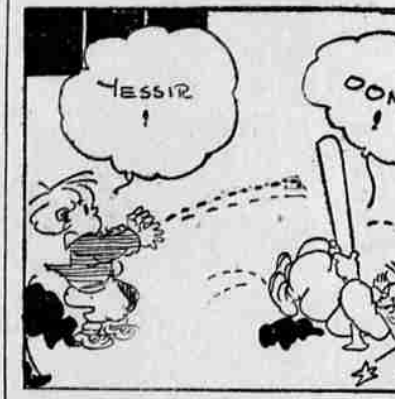
WASHINGTON, Oct. 11.—(AP) Mrs. Mary Rumsey, chairman of the NRA

Consumers Protective committee, undertook today to form county councils to bring the consumer into the recovery equation in balance with labor and industry.
A White House guest, Mrs. Rumsey and her aid, Emily Newell Blair, were invited into Mrs. Roosevelt's press conference, where she outlined plans to utilize the woman buying power of

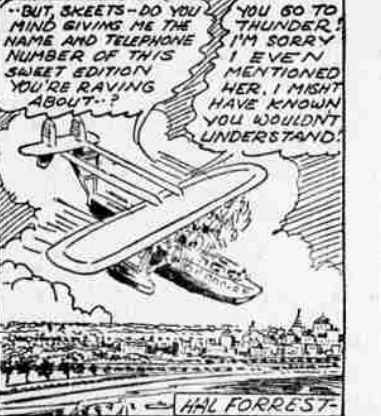
the country toward economic recovery.
Mrs. Rumsey said the economic education through the consumers councils would walk hand in hand with the "buy now" campaign.
ATTENTION, MOTHERS! The famous "Robin Hood Shoes" mean health for your children. \$1.25 to \$3.45. THE BAND BOX & SHOE BOX.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Broadcasts His Love To The World!



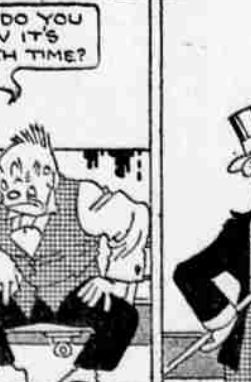
BOUND TO WIN—Danger Outside!



THE NEBBS—There's Come A Time



BRINGING UP FATHER



FRIENDS OF MANN TO APPEAL TO PRESIDENT
KANSAS CITY, Mo., Oct. 11.—(UP) Friends of Conrad Mann, convicted

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