

Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Nesta Middlell says the man whom she found suffering from loss of memory is her husband, Jimmy, and tells him that he stole the Van Berg emeralds, and shot Van Berg. He does not believe her, but cannot disprove the statement. Finally he forces her to turn over the money he had had in his pocket, and goes to the Ledington library to read the details of the Van Berg case in the papers. As he reads he becomes convinced that he did know Van Berg, and had seen the emeralds in his hand. If he did not shoot Van Berg and steal the emeralds, who did?

Chapter 16 JIM IN FLIGHT

IN the end he knew very little more. The police were said to have a clue. Elmer Van Berg had not recovered consciousness. His condition was extremely grave. There was no trace of the emeralds.

He sat back in the hard upright chair and stared straight in front of him. What next? He had left Happicot, and no power on earth would take him back there. He would have to make that quite clear.

He had bought some sheets of paper, a pencil, and a couple of stamped envelopes as he came along. He wrote a few lines of thanks to Min. A nice little thing—kind, pretty, timid. He hoped for her sake that Nesta wasn't stopping there long. It was quite easy to write to Min.

It wasn't at all easy to write to Nesta. How did you write to an unpleasant stranger who happened to be your wife, and make it perfectly clear that you never intended to see her again?

He couldn't imagine how he had ever come to be mixed up with her. Or with this Van Berg affair. According to all the available evidence, he had shot Elmer Van Berg and taken the Inca's emeralds. Unless or until he got his memory back he could neither rebut nor explain this evidence. All he could do was to try and get away from it.

He might remember why he had gone to see Elmer Van Berg. He had gone to see him, and they had talked and had drinks. That was a funny thing—there was nothing in the paper about those drinks. But he remembered drinking with Elmer.

That is to say, he had remembered it. It had come and gone like a flash. Elmer standing up, with his hand on the sylvan. If he could remember that, he ought to be able to remember the whole thing. He might remember it at any time. It was utterly damnable. He'd got to get away out of Ledington—out of the country if possible.

It came to him that there had been no mention of those drinks, because they were a police clue. His finger-marks would be on the glass that he had used. The incident hadn't been given to the press on purpose.

He leaned forward with determination and wrote:
"I am going away. When I am in a position to do so, I will come to some arrangement with you."

He signed, J. R., and fastened the envelope and addressed it to Nesta.

FIVE pounds is not a very large sum. Carefully husbanded, of course, it will go quite a long way. If you tramp the roads, sleep out, and live on bread and cheese, your lodging costs you nothing, and your food not very much. On the other hand, a toothbrush, a cake of soap, and a razor are necessities, and so is a change of linen. Money melts as soon as you begin to buy clothes. How long would his suit last if he slept out in it? It was none too grand now.

He pushed all these things away. He had got to get out of Ledington, and he was lucky to have five pounds to take the road with.

As he passed a newspaper shop at the corner of the Station Road, a headline stared at him from a yard away:

ARREST NEAR IN VAN BERG CASE

A mile out of Ledington he left the high road for a footpath across fields. It took him into a lane which climbed to an open heath.

He sat down to rest on the stump of a tree and looked about him. The day was fine, but not clear. The blue of the sky was mistled over, and the sun came palely through. There was a purple bloom of heather as far as the eye could see. He stared across it at the veiled horizon. A hill like a cloud stood up against its

northern edge—a hill with a double top.
He sat looking at it for a long time, and for as long as he looked at it there were pictures in his mind—broken pictures that came and went, forming, dissolving, and reforming. When he tried to think about them they were gone. He was left with a sense of things most deeply familiar.

He walked on towards the hill. He had bought food in Ledington. At mid-day he sat on a sunny slope and ate. Afterwards he fell asleep and dreamed about the emeralds. It was the same dream every time he slept, but it was getting clearer. In the dream he always knew where the emeralds were, but as soon as he woke up the knowledge faded. Sometimes he could hold it for a moment by shutting his eyes and keeping his mind empty; but as soon as he tried to keep it, it was gone.

The dream always began the same way. He could remember the beginning—Elmer's hand with the scar, and the emeralds dangling from it under the light—eight square green stones with pearls between them. Then the dream broke up into a rush of colored fragments. There was a voice in a fog. There was the sound of a shot a long way off. There was the voice, and there was a picture in his mind of tall stone pillars with pineapple tops, and a drive that wound between them out of sight. The voice said, "Like a kid's green beads," and, "Nobody knows where they are." But in the dream he knew. A round room with five little windows like slits—a place where you might look for a year and never find them.

He woke up, the sun hot on his face. The dream was gone, but the hill still broke the horizon. In some strange way he associated the hill and the dream. He made a pillow of bracken for his head and lay on the slope watching the hill. Presently he would get to it—presently. . . .

He slept again.

"IT'S eleven o'clock," said Caroline to Patsy Ann. "I'm going to bed."

She went up the stairs, which ended on a tiny landing with a door on either side. Her room was on the left, and you went down two steps to it. Both the steps and the floor of the room were old polished boards, very wavy and uneven. The window, which looked to the front of the house, was set in a deep embrasure. She shut the door and turned on the light in the lamp beside her bed. Hazelbury West had had electric light for the last eight years and considered itself very up to date in consequence.

Caroline turned down her bed, folding the quilt carefully and laying it on the chest in which she kept her hats. She had said she wanted to come to bed, but she wasn't really sleepy.

She opened the bottom drawer of the chest of drawers which faced the window and took out a bundle of letters tied with a twist of pale blue knitting silk. Then she went over to the bed. Sitting down on the edge of it, she untied the bundle and turned the letters over.

There were not a great many of them. Two the first year after Jim went out—one for her birthday, and one for Christmas—and two again the second year, and the third. In the fourth year he only wrote for Christmas. The pain of that missed year's interval hurt her still.

In the fifth year there was no letter at all. On her birthday and on Christmas day Caroline read the old letters and tried to make believe that they had just come. It was not a very successful make believe.

In the sixth year there were still no letters.
And then in the seventh year—this year—they began again. He had written at Christmas from New York.

Caroline got out the letter and read it again. It was a very nice letter. She hugged herself a little over it. It began, as all his letters had begun, "Darling Caroline!"; and it was quite long. He had been building a bridge in Mexico, and he had been in Chile, and Peru, and up in wild places in the Andes. He was here, Jim. He always signed just like that: "Yours, Jim."

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The movements of Jim Randall become clearer, Monday.

VETERAN'S SUICIDE MAY BE MURDER

DENVER, Oct. 12.—(AP)—Investigating a report that Robert E. Sweetland, 80, supposedly a suicide victim, had been murdered police said today they had arrested two women and six men for questioning. Sweetland, an advertising man, was found dead in bed last February 3 by his wife. There was a bullet hole in his head and the coroner pronounced his death a suicide. A note to his wife said he was "going to Heaven and work a telegraph key."

FIRE DESTROYS HOTEL ON HOOD

PORTLAND, Ore., Oct. 12.—(AP)—The government camp hotel and its annex on the slope of Mount Hood on the Loop highway, was destroyed by fire today. The tall, three-story wooden structure was quickly consumed by the flames.

EX-GRID STAR CRUEL IS WIFE'S COMPLAINT

SEATTLE, Oct. 12.—(AP)—Mrs. Virginia Tesreau filed suit in superior court here today for divorce from her husband, Elmer L. Tesreau, former University of Washington football star, charging he had "conducted himself in a manner constituting cruel treatment."

S'MATTER POP—

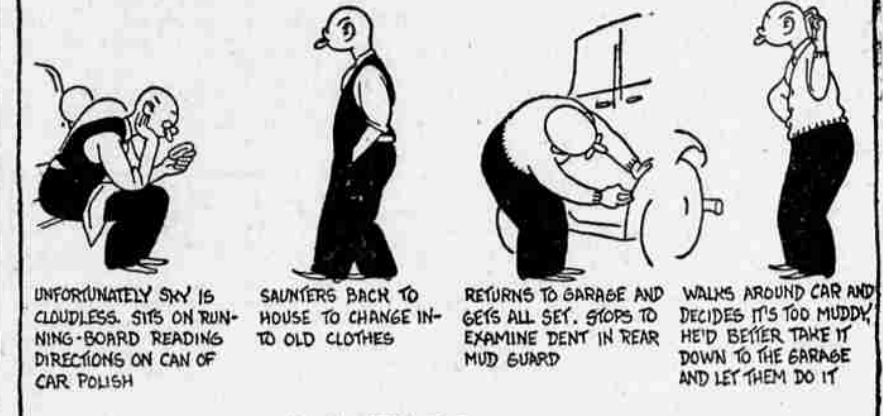
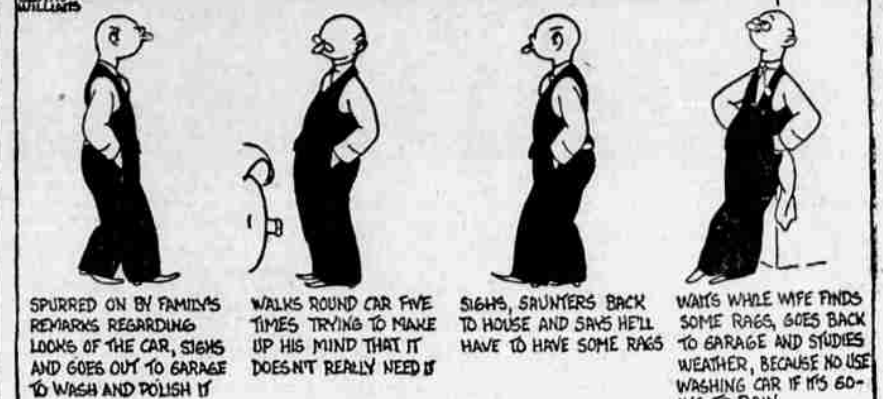
By C. M. PAYNE



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THE FAMILY ALBUM—POLISHING THE CAR

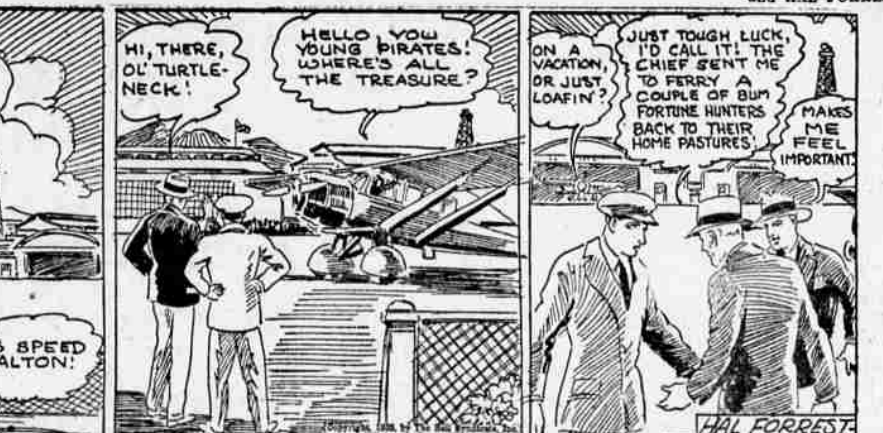
By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Broadcasts His Love To The World!

By GLENN CHAFFIN and HAL FORREST



BOUND TO WIN—Danger Outside!

By EDWIN ALGER



THE NEBBS—There's Come A Time

By SOL HESS



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



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

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NEW YORK, Oct. 12.—(AP)—J. C. Van Eck, president of Shell Union Oil Corp., today was named chairman of the executive committee, a new position created by the directors.

R. O. A. Van Der Woude, former president of the Shell Petroleum Corp., a subsidiary, was named president. W. F. Durkee, Jr., and O. H. Van Seden, both connected with the Shell Union many years, were made vice presidents.

Britain Planning System Like NRA
LONDON, Oct. 12.—(AP)—The adoption of the forty-four hour week along the lines of the American NRA in important sections of the British industrial world, without reduction of wages, was foreshadowed today by announcement of an agreement of the Amalgamated Engineering Union with the Imperial Chemical Industries.

Broken windows glazed by Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

WE'RE CARRYING OUR END! WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT THE PERFECT GUM