

Outrageous Fortune

by Patricia Wentworth

SYNOPSIS: Caroline Leigh had hoped that her trip to London would solve the most puzzle that surrounds the story of Jim Riddell, her cousin. Jim cannot recall the events of the last six weeks. Nesta Riddell has told him that he is Jim Riddell, her husband, and that he has not only stolen the famous Van Berg emeralds, but has shot Elmer Van Berg, their owner. Caroline just has gone to Hale Place, where the beleaguered Jim is hiding, to report her father's error when, in the dark of the foot of the stairs, she is passed by a fleeing intruder and then by Jim himself. Jim returns empty-handed and explains the situation to Caroline.

Chapter II
JIM'S STORY

JIM went on! "He obviously hadn't seen me. Well, then I thought I'd find out what he was up to, so I went after him—and the light was half way up the stairs. I let him get to the top, and go off to the right, and then I followed him. He turned off again and came down here. When I got to the door, he was shining his torch all round the room.

"I thought I'd rather like to know what he was after. I—it was rather odd—I felt as if I did know. He put down the torch, pulled out a box of matches, and struck a match. He was just going to light the candle

Her eyes were as eager as a child's. The things that she wanted to tell Jim crowded together in her mind, jostling and pushing one another for first place. The last corner had it.

"Jim, I've been to London," she said, and pinched his arm quite hard.

"What for?"

"To see whether it was you who signed that old register. I thought if I went and looked we should know."

He had a moment of sickening suspense. He said, "Well?" quietly enough.

"I know it wasn't you—but—"

"But what?" There was the giddy feeling of being uncertain where the next step was to take him.

"It wasn't a proper signature—just a sort of higgledy-piggledy printing. And the clerk remembered that it was because Jim Riddell had his right arm in a sling."

The feeling of giddiness increased. "But you haven't had anything wrong with your arm, Jim. You haven't—have you? And that proves that it wasn't you."

HE was looking across at the shuttered window opposite—the narrow window with the blue curtains, the window that was like a



"I ought to have waited," on the mantelpiece, when I walked into the room. I ought to have waited, but the heavy householder got the better of me—there was something so damned riling about the way he struck that match!"

He gave a short laugh. "I said, 'What the something are you doing here?' and he dropped the match, grabbed his torch, charged right into the middle of me, and banged the door in my face before I got my breath back. It makes me sound like a stiff, but he was most uncommon nippy. It was like trying to get hold of a cat. I wish I'd seen his face."

"You didn't—when he struck the match?"

"No. He had his back to me. The whole thing didn't take half a minute. As I stepped into the room, he dropped the match and hunted me. I hoped you'd seen him."

"What did he want?" said Caroline.

Jim looked past her with a strained expression in his eyes.

"I—I don't know—." There was a pause. He made a movement as if shaking something off. "He may have been a burglar—or just a common or garden tramp."

"Yes," said Caroline. "Why did he look like that? She came a little nearer. "Jim—what's the matter?"

HE was frowning in a puzzled way. "I dreamt about this room—it's just come back to me."

"There isn't anything odd about that. Why shouldn't you dream about it? I often dream about places I know."

"There was something odd about it. A round room, with five windows like alits—that's the way I dreamt about it. Why? We've always called it the Blue Room. Why didn't I dream of it like that? I mean—his frown deepened—"why should I make up a perfectly new description of it and dream of that?"

"I don't know," said Caroline. "You can do anything in a dream—they're quite mad." She slipped her hand through his arm. "Jim, I've got simply heaps to tell you."

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EX-BLY POSTMASTER FREE ON PROBATION

PORTLAND, Oct. 27. —(AP)—Thomas E. Wallis, former postmaster at Bly, Klamath county, was today placed on probation for 18 months after being sentenced to one year in federal prison for embezzling postal funds. He pleaded guilty several weeks ago.

PENNSYLVANIA REPEAL BALLOTING UNHINDERED

HARRISBURG, Pa., Oct. 27. —(AP)—The Dauphin county court today refused to prevent Pennsylvania from voting on repeal of the 16th amendment on November 7.

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LAKEVIEW MAN CRASH VICTIM

LAKEVIEW, Oct. 27.—(Sp.)—Harry Bailey, pioneer merchant of this

city, died Thursday night shortly after his car turned over on the side of the highway about a mile north of town. Bailey and two companions were returning from a goose hunting trip when he was suddenly stricken with a heart attack while driving. The car, a large sedan, turned over several times, throwing the passengers through the top and several feet away.

Bailey's neck, shoulder and leg were broken, but he was still breathing when put into a taxi. He died before the hospital was reached. His companions were uninjured.

Bailey had been in Lakeview since the early 70s and was 68 years old. He had been a member of the Elk and Odd Fellows lodges for twenty-seven years.

CO-OPERATION IN RELIEF NEEDED

SALEM, Oct. 27.—(AP)—A plea for community cooperation in carrying

out whatever relief measures may be passed by the special session of the legislature was made by Mrs. W. W. Gabriel at the Oregon Congress of Parents and Teachers yesterday.

Aid to help dependent mothers provide good homes for their children was cited as a delinquency preventative by Mrs. Elizabeth Webb. Oregon's crisis in education was described by C. A. Howard, superintendent of public instruction.

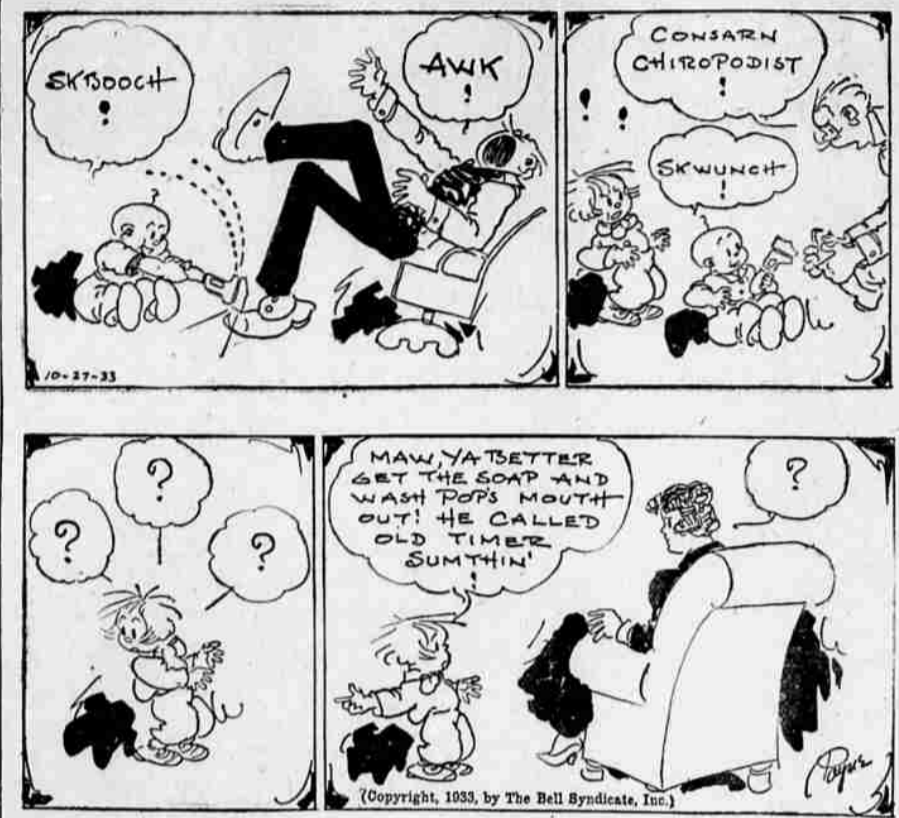
Howard called for permanent state aid of public schools to relieve a financial situation which he said threatens to shorten terms in many Oregon schools.

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By SOL HESS



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