

BLOND GODDESS

A New Serial by Herbert Jensen

SYNOPSIS: Janice Kent, the movie star, her press agent, Harold Greene, and Frank Grahame, the explorer, are led out of their pursuit in Tucson. They are to be sacrificed to a Mexican god; as they arrive at the altar Juan, a Mexican boy who has slipped suspicion to Frank, tells them he has denounced the priest, the man who has deceived both Grahame and Janice. The sacrificial knife is poised over Juan's throat.

Chapter 35 SACRIFICE

THE poised knife descended. Frank heard the thud; he saw the shoulder muscles of the priest working, like those of a dog over a buried bone. There was a sigh from the multitude like a dry wind rustling through a parched forest. Then the man's arm arose. It was dark with blood that streamed from his clenched fist. Grahame averted his gaze. He saw Juan gazing with fascinated terror. Janice leaned against her guard, her body stiff with horror. Greene stared at him with eyes distended. The little man's lips parted in a grimace. "God!" he breathed, and gulped. Grahame swore savagely. "Guns out, Greene!" he raved. His voice was thick with fury. His left hand fumbled under his bandaging. Then Greene did an incredible thing. He took off his guards and stood away from them a pace. His voice rose in a shrill yell that focused the glance of every person on that platform of death upon him. The abkin whirled and stared. After his first bewilderment, Grahame stood, his hand within his bandage, his eyelids narrowed. Greene, of course, had gone mad with shock. Quite mad.

But the voice of the little man was clear with decision; his words were coldly sane. "Janice!" he cried. "Goodbye! And you, too, Grahame. I'm pulling a Post and a Brodie together. If I make a break for you, take it!" As he talked he shuffled backward toward the priest. His guards seemed frozen. "I'm taking it on the lam, and you'd better, too. God hates a pliker! Cameral! Ready! Everybody quiet!" This is the picture—Damn you!

He spun about, and drove his fist into the priest's throat. Again he struck, but this time fell forward against the other. He dragged him around the altar. The man clawed and strove to break the little man's hold. But Greene's hold was heroic. He pulled them closer to the edge. They stood there locked against each other, swaying against the brassy sky. The guards seemed paralyzed.

Whereupon a figure broke from among them. Grahame groaned. The show was over. But as the figure lurched toward those others swaying on the brink, he heard it cry out in Juan's voice. "Bravo, amigo!" He saw the slight form of the boy throw itself against the two. Like a shutter snapped in a camera he saw the image of Greene and the priest flash over, and beyond, the brink.

Juan spun on the edge. Slowly, almost as if he were fading backward, he saw the lad topple outward. His teeth flashed in a last smile; he was gone! A roar surged deafeningly about the pyramid. He pushed his own guards backward and strode toward Janice. One of the men clutched at his wounded arm. He ripped his gun from the bandage and shot him through the body.

He clubbed his gun's barrel against the head of one of the girl's guards, and shot the other as he began to lift his gun. The man's rifle fell toward him, and he caught it between his elbow and his side. "TAKE HIM!" he shouted to Janice. She took the gun and pushed behind him. He went forward, beating at face and hands with the heavy barrel of his automatic. Suddenly they were out of the crowd and leaping down the eastern steps of the pyramid.

Frank gasped advice as they half-jumped, half-fell down the steep descent. "Run straight ahead. There's an airplane at the end of this straightaway. Can you shoot?" The girl compressed her lips and nodded. "Shoot where it hurts," he advised. They were on the level now, and Frank's breath labored in his lungs. He cursed the wound that sapped his strength. Janice, he noted with satisfaction, was running like a whippet, despite the heavy rifle she carried.

An armed native, coming from nowhere, quartered into their path.

His rifle was held at his shoulder. He fired and missed. The slug from Grahame's forty-five took the man in the face. The American stooped and dragged the bandolier of cartridge-clips from about the limp shoulder. He tossed the ammunition to Janice.

He essayed a glance over his shoulder. He saw figures streaming down the side of the pyramid in pursuit. He and the girl had a better start than he had hoped for. It was evident that their margin of lead was desperately slight.

Their footing was good. Flagstones, yards square, paved this central area, and made running easy. The last few yards to the plane seemed interminable.

Grahame scooped up an empty wooden gasoline case, scarcely pausing in his stride. He flung it beside the fuselage.

"Step on that! Can you make it?" he gasped. "Climb in the rear cockpit. Start shooting right away!"

He stumbled to the starting crank and wound the starter. The guards were nearer. As he reached for a strut to haul himself upon the lower wing, he heard the whip-lash of a rifle shot above him.

Again the rifle cracked. He wriggled to the middle of the wing and drew himself upright, clinging to the guy-wires. His flyer's instinct noted that the flying wires were obviously slack.

The months of standing in the open, in the rain and blazing sun, had probably loosened all the rigging. He thanked fortune that the wings were metal, there was no fabric to rot. He prayed that the motor would fire after months of inaction.

Three more shots, evenly spaced cracked over his head. Almost he sobbed in admiration for the girl who was coolly shooting from the plane.

As he threw a leg over the cowl of the cockpit, he flashed a glance toward the pyramid. In the immediate foreground, scarcely two hundred yards away, two men sprawled on the flagstones.

Another sat, face within his spread knees, his rifle on the ground almost under him. Behind several were spreading out fan-wise—those in the center were kneeling in preparation for firing.

INTO the cockpit he sprawled. He heard distant firing and the whine of bullets overhead. A vicious, metallic ripping told him that the plane was being hit.

Then the rifle from the rear cockpit began to crash again, one-two-three in series if five, as the girl fired and reloaded. She was shooting like a veteran in a rifle pit.

He threw on the switch with his sound left hand and feverishly adjusted the throttle and tested the controls. Although stiff, they worked. As he pulled on the starter he made an inarticulate sound—a prayer.

The motor erupted into a booming roar! For an instant it held the even resonance of its explosions, then sputtered. Frantically Grahame jacked the throttle. It was now or never. He could never survive the salvo of bullets that would greet him if he were forced to wind the starter again.

The motor coughed discordantly, then settled into an even drumming that reverberated above the staccato tattoo of rifle fire.

He had noticed that the wheels were unblocked. He shoved the throttle forward. The motor revved up unevenly but the plane began to slide forward.

For a brief instant the ship rolled onward without interruption—there came a bump that dragged one wing tip against the stone. He gunned the motor and ruddered to correct direction.

He saw figures scattering ahead of him. There was another, a smaller thud, as a wing's edge hit a footing native.

Ragged holes appeared in the wings. The great pyramid loomed ahead of him. The tall skid was off the ground. He pulled the stick toward him. She responded, and took the air just as a crash against the pyramid seemed inevitable.

He banked left. The bass roar of the motor echoed against the side of the huge monument. So close was he, that he saw the terror-stricken eyes of the populace as they flattened their bodies against the steep sides.

As he leveled above the tree-tops he was conscious that the controls were sluggish. His right arm was worse than useless. He fought the stick backward with but slight reaction. The effort sent the blood to his head.

(Copyright, 1934, by Herbert Jensen)
There is a crash. Mound—

CARDINALS TEST RELIC'S STATUS AS HOLY SHROUD

TURIN, Italy (AP)—A thorough investigation into the authenticity of the relic preserved here by the Italian royal family as the original Holy Shroud, is being made under the direction of Cardinal Jean Verdier and Maurizio Fosatti.

Two commissions have been formed to conduct the work in consultation with experts in science and history. Cardinal Verdier, archbishop of Paris, heads a French commission and Cardinal Fosatti, archbishop of Turin, is chairman of an Italian commission.

Results of the investigation will be published in Latin and the principal modern languages, in a volume intended for world distribution.

Professor Paul Vignon, of the Catholic University of Paris, who has been engaged in a long scientific study of the shroud, reported to the French Academy of Sciences that it was genuine and delivered a lecture at the Pontifical Gregorian university in Rome in support of his belief.

Many experts, however, insist that it is a mere copy and that the impressions on it, supposed to have been made by Christ's body after the crucifixion, were painted there.

Pope Clement VII ruled that it could be displayed only if the priests told the public it was a copy, but the official church organ, L'Osservatore Romano, now speaks of it as genuine.

It has been in the possession of the House of Savoia since the year 1463 and is kept in a jewel-studded marble case in a special chapel of the Cathedral of Turin.

EAST OREGON RANGES IN EXCELLENT SHAPE

PORTLAND, Ore., Feb. 23.—(AP)—Pulton Fleetwood of Baker, eastern Oregon field representative for the Eastern Oregon Humane society, reported here yesterday that conditions on the eastern Oregon ranges are the best in years.

Fleetwood said that, although there is now snow in the valleys, enough remains in the mountains to insure a plentiful supply of water during the summer.

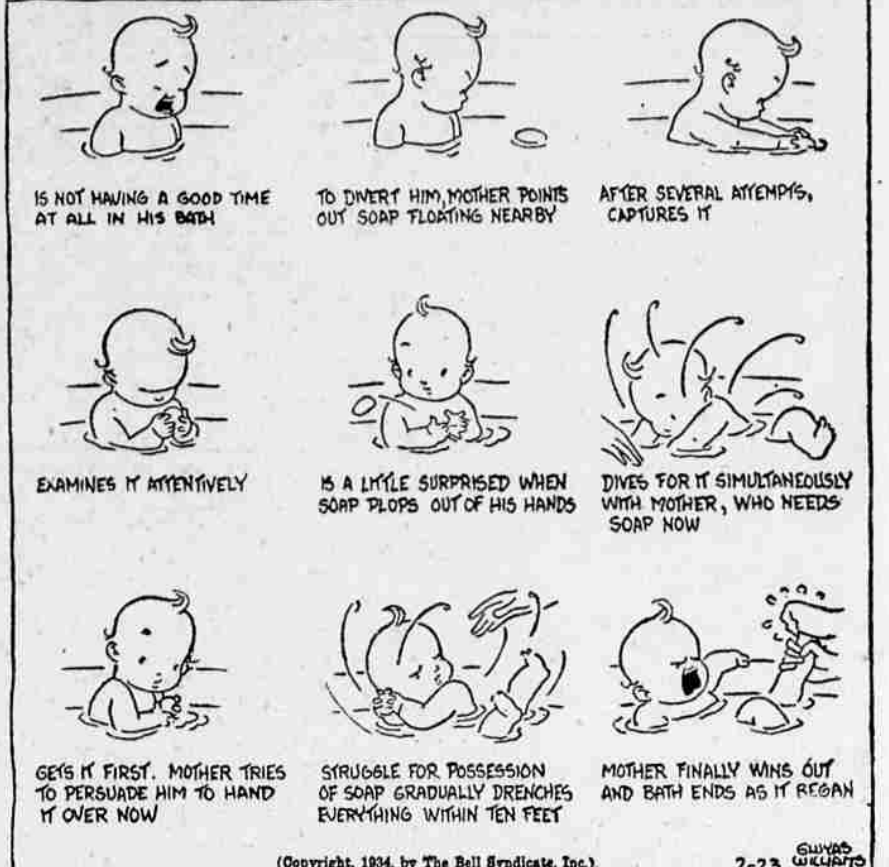
SALEM, Ore., Feb. 23.—(AP)—Salem will be the headquarters of the Williamsite Production Credit association, organization of which was completed at a meeting at the chamber of commerce here yesterday. W. E. Williams, vice-president of the production corporation at Spokane, announced.

GIVE IT A WHIRL



BATH SOAP

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



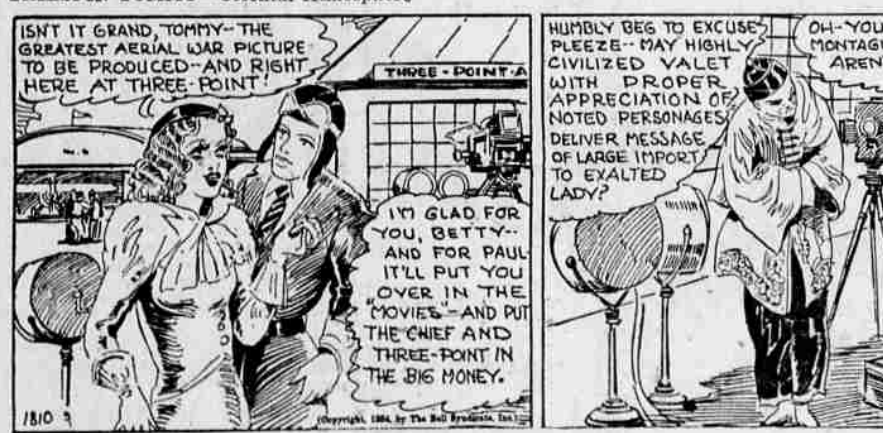
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S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Oriental Atmosphere



By C. M. Payne

By Hal Forrest

BOUND TO WIN—Luke Collapses!



By Edwin Alger

THE NEBBS—Good-Bye, Kid—You're Through



By Sol Hess

FLOATING CANNERY TO MAKE ALASKA VOYAGE

ASTORIA, Ore., Feb. 23.—(AP)—The Columbia River Packers' association announced today that the company's steamship Memnon will be brought to Astoria from Clifton and work will start at once on the transformation of the vessel into a floating cannery. The ship will leave for Alaskan waters in May.

The cost of installing complete cannery equipment on the Memnon is estimated by the company at from \$15,000 to \$20,000.

BRINGING UP FATHER



By George McManus

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