— Murder at MOCKING HOUSE

BY WALTER C. BROWN

SYNOPSIS: Pierre Dufresne, after receiving a series of threatening letters, is shot at on a lonely road. Sergeant Harper, assigned to protect him, does not understand Dufresne's hint that someone close to him may have ambushed him. They decide to open Dufresne's Powhatan Terrace house as bait for the killer; Harper is talking with Sheriff Doyle, a reporter, when word comes that Officer Hamill and another man have been found dead in Dufresne's house.

Chapter Eight

CRIME SCENE

LET us go back a short time and follow the adventures of Bandit Chaser No. 18.

With Hilleary driving and Connally calling the turns, the speedy little car headed for Officer Hamill's territory. They had to drive slowly, for the headlights could not cut very deeply into the teeth of the storm and the automatic windshield wiper just about held its own against the fiercely-driven snow.

Connally kept a sharp lookout, but in vain. At every street intersection Hilleary sounded the whirring siren call, familiar to every patrolman's ear as the signal of the "Flying Squad."

Hilleary brought the car to a halt beside the call-box from which Hamill should have reported. It bore a conical cap of snow, leaning crazily to one side from the force of the wind. All around was a white wilderness, inches deep, and gaining steadily. Unbroken in its smooth, wind-drifted reaches, only a gentle bulge showed where the curbstone was set.

Connally borrowed the heavy flashlight from the car's equipment and got out of the machine. The policeman turned on the beam and flashed it in a circle. Here and there were unmistakable ridges and filled-in hollows which roughly outlined the imprints a shoe had left earlier in the storm.

By going a little farther afield he could distinguish two sets of the old tracks, presumably made by Hamill's coming to the pillar for his earlier "pull" and his subsequent departure.

There were a few tire-marks in the street, but no other tracks along the sidewalk, and, having struck the scent, Connally automatically started along the trail. Hilleary drove the car at a snail's pace on a parallel line. For two blocks they continued so, when, upon crossing an intervening street, Connally found that he had lost the trail.

Retracing his steps, he found that a radical alteration had taken place in Hamill's course. The old tracks showed that Hamill had crossed about a third of the width of the street, when something had induced him to set off at a sharp angle. The almost obliterated footprints led along the intersecting street.

The trailers followed this tangent, but had not proceeded very far before they became aware of a booming sound. Puzzled, they came to a halt, awaiting a repetition of the noise. When it came again, they recognized the sound at once. The front door of one of the houses near the far end of the block was unlatched and the wind was banging it to and fro with thunderous force.

SOME prompting of instinct induced Connally to break into a run. He pulled up, panting, at the entrance to the front lawn, a flat, desolate level of virgin snow, bounded by bare hedges and skeleton bushes. The flashlight showed that the footsteps had turned in there. It also picked out the bronze numerals, "34," on one of the stone pillars of the gate. The massive front door, after its fitful booming, stood open invitingly, due to a lull in the wind.

Hilleary got out of the car, and, side by side, the two policemen walked up the path and scanned the front of the house, a three-story stone mansion standing in its own grounds. There was no light, no sign of life anywhere about the place. The hall beyond the yawning door was merely a black cavity leading into the unknown.

"I guess we followed the wrong tracks," Hilleary suggested; "these are just from somebody going home."

"What about that door?" Connally countered. "People don't leave their front doors banging in a storm. We'd better look into this. Come on!"

Connally pulled off a glove and pressed the electric bell button, holding it down with his finger. There was no answering sound. After waiting a suitable time, Connally stepped gingerly across the threshold. The inner vestibule doors were closed.

He turned the knob and peered into a still deeper well of darkness. "Hello! Hello!" he shouted, and ...ded against the framework of ...e inner door. One of the cold glass panels shivered under the vibration and came jingling down over the floor.

Still there was no answer. A dead silence reigned within. The flashlight, sweeping from side to side, gave fugitive glimpses of a wide, deep hall with paneled woodwork and richly furnished. But there was something eerie about this silent place with its teetering door and the snow seeping over the sill.

They looked at each other, then started as the door thundered shut behind them. "Prop that damn thing open!" Connally shouted, and jerking out his service revolver, advanced warily into the hall. He had glimpsed a faint line of light under a door farther down the hall. He tried the knob cautiously, then flung the door back with a quick motion. Hilleary had found the electric light switches near the front door, but could get no response from any of them.

Armed and alert, Connally peered into the room—and stood rooted to the threshold. Over his shoulder came the sharp hiss of indrawn breath from his companion as he, too, saw.

Connally's brain was swift in reaction. A moment's examination of the gruesome burden of that room confirmed his worst fears. "Don't touch anything here," he warned, backing away toward the door. "I saw a telephone out in the hall. If it's disconnected you'll have to drive back and report this." To his satisfaction, when he lifted the telephone receiver he heard the familiar buzz, and in a few moments his call was through to the Fourteenth Precinct.

CONNALLY had no sooner replaced the telephone receiver than the clammy silence of this tragic house weighed down upon them again. The wind went whistling down the deep hall, stirring up furtive rustlings, as of unseen draperies, while the silent snow sifted farther and farther over the threshold. The one room in the house they had entered had been fairly warm, but the exposed hallway was as chill and biting as the outdoors.

Hilleary swung his torch in exploring circles. The questing beam discovered a refectory table bearing several bronze candelabra with tall, tapering candles. These sputtered and flickered a great deal before they consented to burn, turning the hall into a place of leaping shadows and shifting visibility.

"You take one light, and I'll take the other, and we can make sure there's nobody hiding on this floor, anyway," Connally suggested. "We can let the upstairs go until the others come."

A rush of wind extinguished the candles in one swoop. "We'll have to fix that front door," Hilleary said.

"You light the candles again, I'll attend to the door," Connally replied. There was a sturdy Yale lock on the inside, but he found that the lock bar had been released while the door was open, and that, consequently, the door could not be closed until that was set back. He did this and it locked automatically. He also noticed an old-fashioned key hanging beside the door jamb, and, on trying it, found that this was for the ordinary lock below the knob.

Guns in hand, they lifted the candelabra and looked in all the rooms opening from the central hall. The search was quickly made and yielded nothing in the way of interest. There were two doors in the rear of the house. Each was not only locked, but bolted on the inside. Connally found a key that fitted both locks and put it in his pocket. There was also a short corridor that led to a side door. This was locked, but the key was not present. The door to the cellars had no lock, only a latch, but was bolted at the side and top, so it was left as found, after its security had been tested.

Connally was just returning from this survey when there came a thunderous pounding at the front door. The policeman hastened to open the door. He was surprised when he saw that the first man to cross the threshold wore civilian clothes, but soon recognized Detective-Sergeant Harper, and saluted. Next came Officer Clymer, then Smith, and lastly a figure in a gray overcoat slid jauntily past just as he swung the ponderous door shut. Once inside, Doyle was all eyes, as alert as a pointer in the middle of a tall grass field.

Harper pulled off his gloves. "Where are they?" he asked, simply.

"In there." Connally pointed to the closed door on the left.

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Tomorrow, Harper investigates a gruesome crime.

CWA DEMOBILIZING INCREASES APRIL RELIEF SPENDING

Federal Report Shows More Families On List Than Same Time Year Ago — Resources of Many Gone

WASHINGTON, May 10.—(AP)—The department of commerce reported today that the number of families on relief as of April 1 was larger this year than at the same time last year.

In its monthly survey of current business, reporting generally improved conditions in most sections of American business and industry, the department noted:

"Notwithstanding the progress made in recent months in absorbing into industry a portion of the unemployed, the number without work remains large.

"The exhaustion of individual resources, together with the demobilization of the CWA workers, has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of families on relief as of April 1 is estimated to be larger than a year ago."

The survey reported substantial gains in employment and payrolls between the middle of February and the middle of March, with 79 out of 90 industries studied showing improvement in this line.

Statistical information on other aspects of the business scene for March and early weeks of April showed expanding productive activity, a gain in retail sales, higher foreign trade and an advance in distribution.

Only the construction industry, characterized as the "outstanding exception to the general trend," failed to go along with other industry and trade, its index falling 23 points below December.

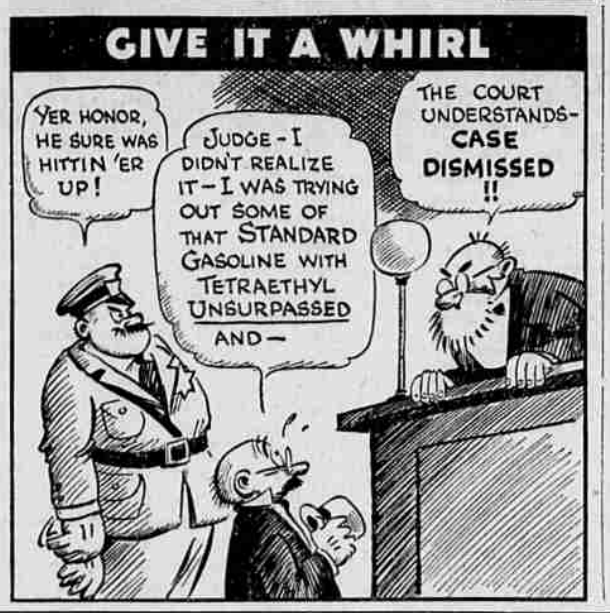
Manufacturing production increased during March by more than the usual amount, and stood at 85 per cent of the average for 1923-1925, taken as normal.

DILLINGER'S 'FRIEND' DEFEATED IN PRIMARY

HAMMOND, Ind., May 10.—(AP)—Prosecutor Robert C. Estill of Lake county, whose picture taken with Desperado John Dillinger caused nation-wide comment, today conceded victory in the Democartic primaries to his opponent State Senator Fred A. Egan of Gary.

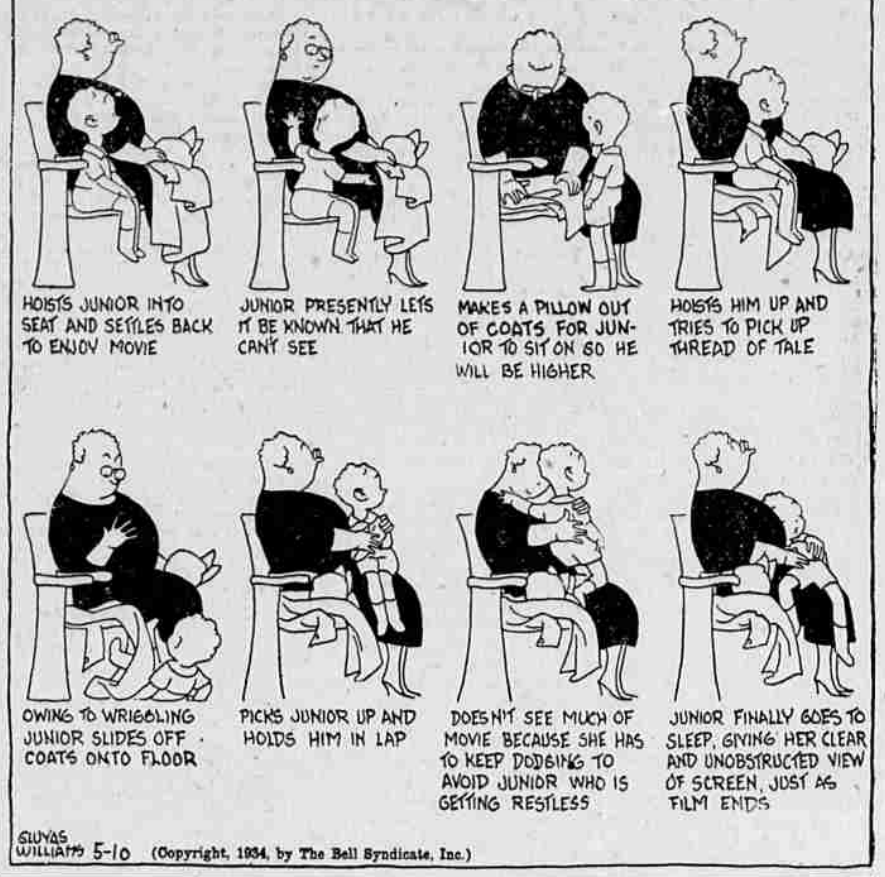
On the basis of early returns, Estill was running far behind.

GIVE IT A WHIRL



JUNIOR AT THE MOVIES

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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S'MATTER POP— By C. M. Payne

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Yvonne Puts On An Act! By Hal Forrest

BEN WEESTER'S CAREER—The Crew By Edwin Alger

THE NEBBS—A Good Argument By Sol Hess

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BRINGING UP FATHER By George McManus

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INDICT BANKERS FOR MAIL FRAUD

CLEVELAND, May 10.—(AP)—Five former bankers and a former county official were indicted by a federal grand jury today on charges of making a false statement and using the mails to promote a scheme to defraud.

The latest indictments, climaxing a year of investigation by department of justice agents, center around alleged "window dressing" of statements of condition of the Union Trust company and Guardian Trust company, which went into liquidation.

Those indicted today were Joseph R. Nutt, former chairman of the board of the Union Trust company, and former treasurer of the Republican national committee; Wilbur M. Baldwin, former Union Trust president; J. Arthur House, former Guardian president; A. R. Fraser and Harry C. Robinson, former Guardian vice presidents, and Alex Bernstein, former chief deputy county treasurer.

TYPEWRITER MAKERS WALK OUT IN STRIKE

SYRACUSE, N. Y., May 10.—(AP)—More than 3,000 men and women employes of the Remington Rand Typewriter company walked out on strike here and at Ilion this afternoon in what their leaders described as a protest against failure of the company officials to recognize their union.

SALEM, May 10.—(AP)—Salem grocery store operators met today with Max Gehlhar, director of agriculture, in an effort to fix minimum retail potato prices.