



I did not kill Osborne

By VICTOR BRIDGES

SYNOPSIS: Several things have happened to Nicholas Trench since he was acquitted of the charge of murdering his cousin, Sir Seymour, and his cousin, Sir Seymour, have quarrelled because Seymour wants him to get out of England; he learns that the studio next to his has been taken by a young woman; he receives word that Sir William Avon, the chemist's engineer, wishes to see him; and two strangers appear at his door asking to come in.

Chapter Nine

THE SAVING VOICE

"WE HAVE no connection with any newspaper," the man who called himself Stellman said. "What we have to tell you is strictly private and only concerns yourself."

For a second I still hesitated; then my curiosity got the better of me.

"Come along in," I said. "It's more comfortable than talking on the doorstep." I shepherded them through the hall, and closing the studio door after us, I made an inviting gesture towards the sofa.

"Won't you sit down?" I continued. "I am sorry I can't offer you a drink. I only got back a few minutes ago, and I'm afraid there's nothing in the place."

"On the contrary," said Mr. Stellman. "I am inclined to believe there is." He turned to his companion. "Do you not agree?"

With a swift movement the other whipped his hand out of his pocket, and to my unspeakable amazement I found myself staring down the barrel of a Mauser pistol.

"Don't move," drawled its owner. "or you'll get hurt. Just you stay quite still, like you are."

With that ugly looking little black muzzle pointing straight at my heart, I hadn't the smallest inclination to do anything else.

"Now, Mr. Trench—it was the bearded man who was addressing me—I think that we may as well proceed straight to business. No doubt you have already guessed the object of our visit."

I shook my head. "You overrate my intelligence," I said. "At present I can only imagine that you've both escaped from a lunatic asylum."

His expressionless eyes stared back coldly into mine. "You will not help yourself by being insolent. We have come to recover a document which you stole from the safe in Osborne's house after you had murdered him."

For a moment I was completely dumfounded. So that was it! That was the explanation of the crime, and in some way or other these two extraordinary strangers were connected with the mystery. Who they might be or where they had come from Heaven alone knew. All there could be no doubt about was the fact that they were dead in earnest.

"I hate to disappoint you," I said. "but you're barking up the wrong tree altogether. I didn't kill Osborne, and I didn't steal any of his property."

"See here," jerked in the one with the gun. "We don't take no stock in that fool verdict. You got it right enough, and by Heaven you'll hand it over."

"Better leave him to me." The other moved a step nearer. "What my friend says is correct, Mr. Trench. We know you have the formula, and whatever means we have to use we intend to get possession of it. You will be very foolish indeed if you drive us to extremes."

HE SPOKE quietly, but there was something in his voice which convinced me that he meant what he said. I could well believe that he was the kind of gentleman who would stick at nothing.

"I can only tell you the truth," I protested. "I can't make you believe it. I haven't got your confounded paper, and if you're silly enough to shoot me you must put up with the consequences."

The clean-shaven man laughed. It was not a pleasant sound. "Say," he inquired, "ain't he had enough of this?"

"Quite, I think," Mr. Stellman felt deliberately in his pocket, and with his eyes still fixed on mine, drew out a neatly rolled coil of thin whipcord.

"I will give you a last chance," he said. "If you still refuse I shall tie your hands and legs together with this, and then things will happen to you which, believe me, you will not enjoy at all. I can promise you that in a few minutes you will be ready enough to answer my questions."

Before he had finished speaking I had made up my mind. If the choice lay between stopping a bullet or being trussed up and tortured, I had no doubt at all as to which I

preferred. I stood as still as death but every muscle in my body was tense and ready.

The man who was holding the pistol took a step towards me. "You stir a finger," he said, "and I'll blow your guts out."

With a quick jerk Stellman undid the coil. The loops tumbled to the floor, and at the same moment, staggeringly clear through the strained silence, came the sound of a girl's voice.

"The police, please—as quickly as possible."

"What was that?" The pistol was still pointing full at my midsection, but from the half shadowed face above it two startled eyes were searching the studio.

"It came from there—the room over the staircase."

"Is that the police? Will you please come at once to Queen Studios, Chalk Farm? It's a case of murder."

A foul oath burst from the clean-shaven man's lips: "Some blighted Jane phoning up the cops. Here take this and I'll . . ."

"No, it's too late now," Stellman's voice was quiet but peremptory. "Whatever happens we can't afford to be found here." He picked up the coil and thrust it back into his pocket.

"But say . . ." "Do as I tell you. Keep him covered and follow me." He walked unhesitatingly to the entrance where he turned and faced me. "Au revoir, Mr. Trench. I was not aware that you were entertaining friends; we shall meet again very soon."

"I hope so," I said civilly. After by step the other backed out after him. There was a brief pause the faint click of a latch, and the front door shut softly.

To a man who is not accustomed to miracles the sudden arrival of one is apt to be a trifle disconcerting. On the whole, however, I acted with commendable promptitude.

It must have been rather less than three seconds before I had wrenched round the key and shot home the bolt behind them, and not more than another two before I was back again in the studio doorway.

I stood there breathing quickly and staring up at my bedroom. "I don't know who you are," I said, "but I should be frightfully pleased to make your acquaintance."

VERY quietly the door opened, and a girl stepped forward into the gallery. She was a small, slender figure dressed in plain black with a curly mop of copper colored hair. The light was shining full in her face and at the sight of those blue eyes and that sensitive, delicate beauty my heart gave a sudden wild leap.

"My sainted aunt!" I said to myself incredulously. It was the girl I had seen at my trial—the girl who had sat silent and motionless in the corner seat, looking down at me as I stood in the dock.

"You are sure they can't come back?" she asked in a low voice. "Not unless they break open the door." I advanced a couple of paces. "It's the police that are going to be the trouble. What am I to say to them?"

"You won't have to say anything at all."

"But . . ." "You see I didn't really ring them up," she went on calmly. "I only pretended to!"

I drew in a long breath. Then the comic side of the whole thing suddenly struck me, and without the smallest warning I went off into a shout of laughter. The girl stood perfectly still—her small hands gripping the balustrade.

"It reminds me of that text in the Bible," I said. "The wicked flee where no man pursueth." I took another step towards her. "Won't you come down and introduce yourself?" I suggested. "I always like to thank people who save me from being murdered."

Very slowly she descended the staircase.

"You hav. nothing to thank me for, I care. I wish the same object as these two men."

"You did what?" I inquired. "I came to get my papers which I thought you had stolen from Osborne."

I stood for a moment looking at her blankly. It seemed to me as if the whole world were suddenly going mad.

(Copyright 1934, Penn Publishing Co.) Nicholas' uninvited guest explains many things to him, Monday.

EAST MAIN SEWER CONSTRUCTION HAS COUNCIL APPROVAL

The city superintendent's work report for the various departments during November and several matters of minor importance were brought before the city council Tuesday evening at the regular meeting of the group at the city hall. The body voted approval of the sewer construction on East Main street.

It was reported at the council meeting that Bobby Robinson, 14-year-old youth injured in a fire truck accident here in August, returned Tuesday night from Portland, where he has been in the hospital. The council, at a special meeting during the week, voted an additional \$50 for his care, bringing the total expended for the youth up to \$605.

Councilman E. A. Kroschel said he had received complaints of an electrical interference in the area of South Newtown and Tenth streets that was noticeable in radio reception. City Attorney Frank Farrell also reported the mail box in front of the Medford pharmacy, through some wrong connection, caused a check to anyone attempting to mail a letter there. He said it was necessary to take a trip to the postoffice, as the box could not be opened. Frank Rogers, city inspector, said the trouble was due to some decorations and that it had already been repaired.

A report from City Judge A. D. Curry stated that he had taken in \$22.50 during the month of November. A measure approving the specifications

FEDERAL LIQUOR TAXES CAUSE BOOTLEGGING IS CONTROL CHIEF'S CLAIM

PORTLAND, Dec. 6.—(P)—Describing bootlegging as the principal problem of liquor control, George L. Sammis, chief of Oregon's control system, today blamed high federal liquor taxes for the prevalence of illicit intoxicants.

"On even the youngest and newest domestic whiskies," Sammis explained, "the consumer must pay \$2 a gallon to the government." The high rate of taxation, he said, encourages bootlegging "and practically amounts to a protective tariff for this illegal industry."

Sammis reviewed liquor conditions on the eve of the first anniversary of Oregon's liquor control commission.

The bootlegger, he said, cannot be entirely eliminated until prices of legal liquor can be substantially reduced. And he stated, "the only substantial reduction in the price of legal whiskey must come about through reduction of federal taxes."

He mentioned that prior to prohibition the federal internal revenue tax was \$10 a gallon, and that today it is \$2 a gallon. On imported liquors an import duty of \$5 a gallon is added.

NEWPORT, Ore., Dec. 5.—(P)—Palmer Lamoreaux, 27, apparently the victim of a hit-run driver, died in a Toledo hospital today from a skull fracture. He was found unconscious Sunday night on the Coast highway near Agate Beach. He never regained consciousness.

ROSEBURG BOY WINS CHICAGO CORN PRIZE

CHICAGO, Dec. 5.—(AP)—George Shambrock of Roseburg, Ore., was awarded first prize last night in the junior corn contest for region 1 at the 35th International Livestock exposition, Carson Adams of Junction City, Ore., won second place.

Iris Plant Blooms Twice BOISE, Idaho.—(UP)—Winter may be approaching in Idaho but that doesn't mean a thing to an iris plant in the garden of Mrs. T. D. Lewis' home. The plant blossomed last spring. Now it is in full flower again.

HOPE

STARTS FOR SCHOOL, THINKING UNEASILY OF ALL HIS UNFINISHED HOMEWORK

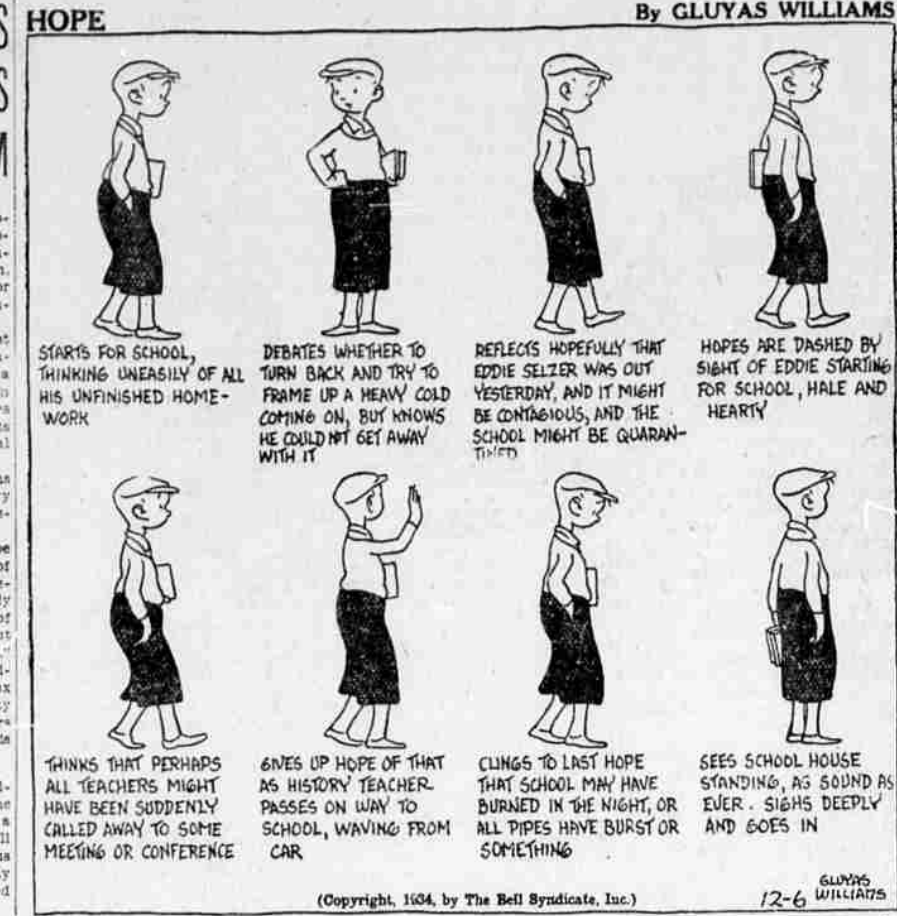
DEBATES WHETHER TO TURN BACK AND TRY TO FRAME UP A HEAVY COLD COMING ON, BUT KNOWS HE COULDN'T GET AWAY WITH IT

THINKS THAT PERHAPS ALL TEACHERS MIGHT HAVE BEEN SUDDENLY CALLED AWAY TO SOME MEETING OR CONFERENCE

GIVES UP HOPE OF THAT AS HISTORY TEACHER PASSES ON WAY TO SCHOOL, WAVING FROM CAR

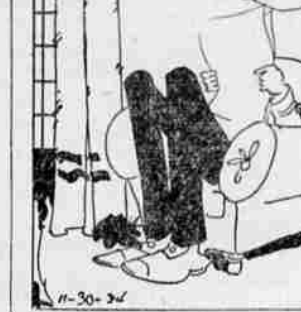
CLINGS TO LAST HOPE THAT SCHOOL MAY HAVE BURNED IN THE NIGHT, OR ALL PIPES HAVE BURST OR SOMETHING

SEES SCHOOL HOUSE STANDING, AS SOUND AS EVER. SIGHS DEEPLY AND GOES IN



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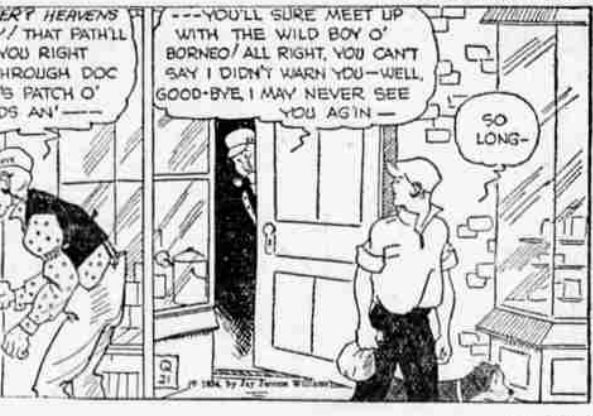
S'MATTER POP—



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Enrico Garcia!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Warning



THE NEBBS—It Was Ever Thus



BRINGING UP FATHER



ISLAND VICTIM IS IDENTIFIED

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 5.—(AP)—Captain G. Allan Hancock, whose exploration cruiser the Veteo III has arrived at the Galapagos archipelago, scene of the mysterious deaths of two men on lonely Marchena Island, today radioed to the Associated Press that he had definitely identified one of the bodies as Alfred Rudolph Lorenz.

BRITISH LAW REFORMER PASSES AT AGE OF 83

LONDON, Eng., Dec. 5.—(AP)—The first Vicar of the law, champion of many reforms of the English law and the last member of the liberal party to serve as lord chancellor, died early today at the age of 83.

Dog Tackled Football Player

MT. CARMEL, Pa. (UP)—When a dog bit a football player, that is news—in Mt. Carmel. That is what happened in a high school football game here. John Melnick, substitute, was running onto the field to enter the game. A dog ran at his heels and snapped at him. It was necessary for Melnick to have medical attention, and continue on the substitute players' bench.

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