NEVER MIND THE LADY

by David Garth

SYNOPSIS: Terry Willett met Allaire West in the tropics, and Allaire saved Terry's life by shooting a native. But there was a misunderstanding; when Terry looked Allaire up, in Washington, the meeting was not a success, and it was brief. Now George Fox, attaché in the tropical city of the shooting, has returned to Washington on business, has tried to find Allaire, whom he loves, and has found instead a very tricky man named LaMarr at the West home. LaMarr demands a few words with Fox.

Chapter 24

BLACKMAIL

FOX regarded him keenly. LaMarr seemed very sure of himself. Knew all the tricks of manners, could dance divinely, and talk vividly of far countries and big game hunts at early dawn—that must have intrigued Nell West, but Allaire had never had any use for him.

"Well, let's have it," he said. "What's on your mind, Mr. LaMarr?"

The other waved a hand.

"This is hardly the place—may I have the honor to call?"

"What's the matter with right now?"

LaMarr shrugged.

"Nothing. But let us go where we won't be disturbed."

He seemed to know his way around the house. He took Fox downstairs to the little reception room with the brassbound clock. They sat down and LaMarr took a cigaret out of a long silver case and then placed the case at Fox's elbow with a polite nod.

"Mr. Fox," he said, lighting up and leaning back in a cloud of smoke, "I have come across something that might cause some unpleasantness and notoriety if it should be published abroad."

Fox said nothing.

"You do not know of what I speak perhaps?" LaMarr queried.

"Not exactly," said Fox. "Begin at the beginning."

"Ah—yes." LaMarr nodded, and smoked for a minute in silence. Fox wondered what nationality he was. There was a lot of English in him and some French and Spanish too. Might have been somebody once—he'd been educated at an American or English university, that was a cinch.

"Mr. Fox," he said suddenly, "did you notice anything unusual the night of the Legation Club Polo Ball given under the auspices of your Embassy?"

The attaché was suddenly alert.

"I don't think so," he said calmly.

"Remarkable," mused LaMarr. "I would have thought you had. Well, Mr. Fox, I wouldn't have noticed anything either—except that I came out on the verandah late that evening to smoke, to look at the stars, to wait—for a friend—perhaps," he smiled lazily, "and I heard Novaes, your Embassy runner, chattering with the carriage drivers.

"He had driven to the Rosina B with the beautiful Señorita West. The good Novaes was very curious why the beautiful Señorita wanted to go to the docks at night. I, too, was curious. Strange, I thought. What business could bring Miss West to the docks at Rosina B?"

He nodded at Fox. "Interesting, do you not think? The ways of women are strange, are they not?"

Fox nodded slowly. He had to pick his way carefully here.

"Strange," he agreed. "Well, what about it?"

"The polo party left," LaMarr continued, "rather ahead of their schedule—the fear of revolution perhaps—and yet I was interested in why a lady like Miss West should go to the docks. There must have been something very attractive there to have drawn a lady of her tastes and refinement. Perhaps I too would enjoy it. I was at loose ends. I investigated."

HE PAUSED and inhaled deeply on his cigaret. Fox sat very still. The man reminded him of a handsome powerful cat lazily pawing a ball of yarn with sheathed claws.

"And what do you think, Mr. Fox? What do you think I discovered?"

"A few ships, for one thing," hazarded Fox.

LaMarr bent forward.

"This must remain a secret between us," he said deeply, "on your honor as a gentleman. A man had been shot on the docks that night, Mr. Fox. Shot by a woman for whom the police were even then searching. He lingered at death's door for a few days and then died. The lady, Mr. Fox, had committed—murder!"

Something chased up and down George Fox's spine. This was a new one on him. He hadn't known Hildez had died. He'd meant to follow the case, but he'd been so busy at the Embassy he hadn't had a chance. And, anyhow, getting Allaire off had been all that mattered.

"Murder," repeated LaMarr, looking at him intently, "is an ugly word, Mr. Fox. The story would have its elements of interest. Why then did this American society girl kill Luis Hildez, the shipping boss—?"

"Hold up, LaMarr," Fox ordered peremptorily. "You don't know that she did—."

"Ah," said LaMarr, "but who is to prove she didn't? Who is to prove facts wrong? You were there perhaps? Perhaps you will say that you shot him yourself with the true gallantry of the young man who shields his lady? Oh, the story opens tremendous possibilities. It must not get out. Oh, no, it must not."

"Who'd be interested in a story like that?"

LaMarr shrugged.

"I have reason to believe that in certain quarters it would be worth ten thousand dollars. Murder under strange circumstances is always intriguing. Is is not so?"

Why did he keep stressing that murder part of it? It was a dirty word. What a break! The trouble was, Fox thought grimly, that Allaire wouldn't deny anything she had done that night, but she'd be too proud to go into details.

Then what?—sensational headlines in yellow journals, graphic drawings in scandal sheets, pictures of Allaire and her home, of Steve Perry and the rest of that crowd, stories of her brief stormy affairs.

And who was to prove she'd shot in self-defense, fill in the chinks between the facts? Where was Willett? Ducking bullets in Propionoire probably. What a surprise party this was.

LAMARR'S eyes had been fixed on him steadily.

"I think you agree that it is best nothing be said," he remarked softly. "Is it not so, Mr. Fox?"

"I'd hate to see any lady embarrassed, if that's what you mean."

"Quite so. Particularly a lady with the social background of—" he stopped, smiling deprecatorily. "But I must not be indiscreet beyond the bounds of comprehension. Let us say no more about it." He waved a hand. "Mr. Fox, I find myself in a very embarrassing position, financially—"

Fox drew a breath. Now it was coming. He'd spotted it long ago.

"—certain investments have turned out badly." He shook his head sadly. "But you are not interested in that, of course?"

"My sympathy," said Fox, watching him like a hawk.

"Ah—your sympathy." LaMarr stared fixedly at the glowing tip of his cigaret. "Mr. Fox, I need thirty thousand dollars. I need it immediately. You—don't know who would arrange a loan for me perhaps?"

"That's a lot of money."

"Not such a sum—considering the interests involved.

Fox said nothing for a moment. There wasn't much of the diplomat in his handsome face as he looked at LaMarr, but there was a certain hunching to the shoulders that hinted at action some time in the very near future.

LaMarr seemed to sense that. He laughed.

"Nothing unpleasant, please, Mr. Fox," he said calmly. "I can be unpleasant too—which is one reason I have no country just now. I merely ask you to arrange a loan for me—you refuse?"

"I refuse," said Fox grimly.

LaMarr sighed and arose. There was a queer air of triumph about him that Fox couldn't quite fathom.

The attaché had the idea that LaMarr hadn't cared particularly whether he "arranged the loan" or not. LaMarr had wanted something else—and whatever it was, Fox had a strange feeling that he'd got it.

"Ah, well, no matter, Mr. Fox. I will look elsewhere. If you do not care to accommodate me, perhaps Mr. West will be more amenable. Good day."

"Just a minute," said Fox. "Get this, LaMarr. I don't intend to let you get away with anything queer. Understand?"

"You threaten?" said LaMarr, pained. "A diplomat—now, really, Mr. Fox."

He bowed and left. Fox lit a cigaret and tried to relax. It was as pretty a set-up for a little blackmail as he'd ever seen.

Allaire would probably have told LaMarr to go to the devil, but Ray and Nell West would submit to a shake-down. So would Steve Perry probably. And Fox himself hated the idea of seeing the girl he loved spread over countless yellow sheets, her motives misconstrued, stamped for life by purple pens.

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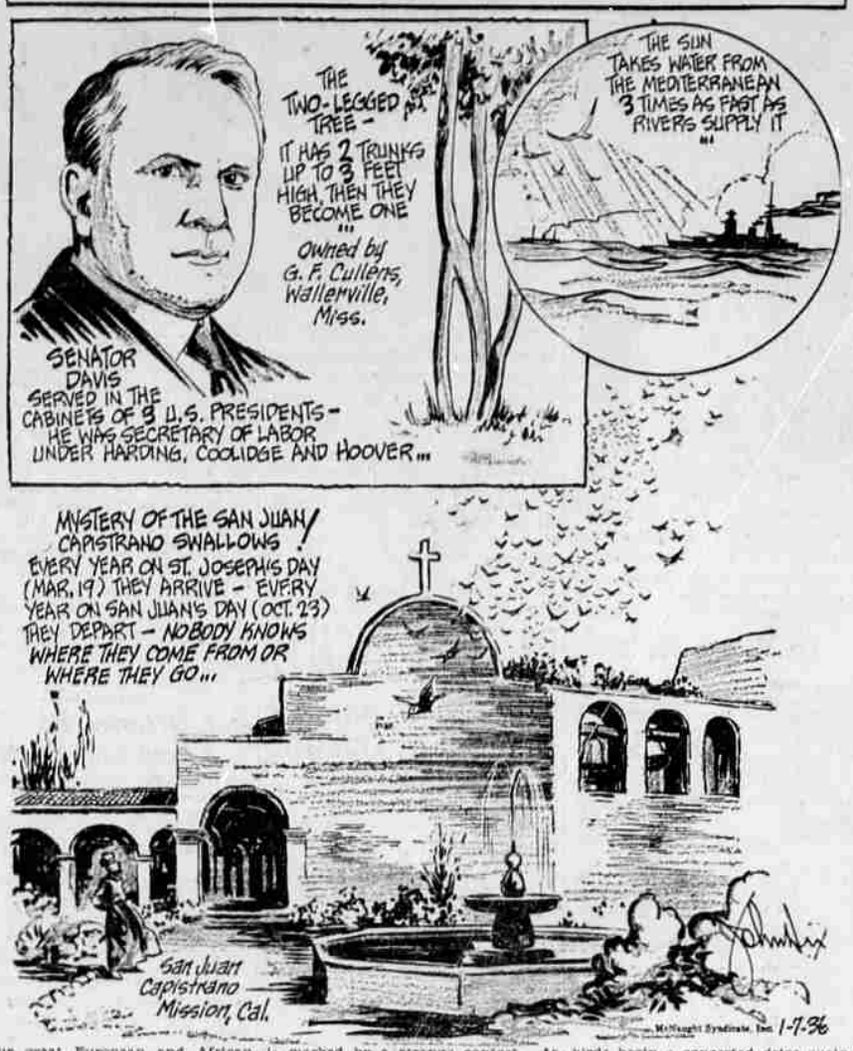
Terry Willett takes an important step, Monday.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



Four great European and African rivers empty into the Mediterranean sea, which lies, almost landlocked, between those two continents. The Nile, Ebro, Po and Rhone all flow into the sea—but in spite of this the Mediterranean would dry up if it were not for the influx of water from the Atlantic ocean past the Rock of Gibraltar. Strange as it seems, the sun evaporates three times as much water from the Mediterranean every day as is supplied to it by rivers.

Mysteriously, but punctual to the day, great flocks of swallows annually take up their residence at the famous old San Juan Capistrano mission at San Juan Capistrano, California, on each March 19, which is St. Joseph's day. And just as mysteriously they leave the mission each October 24, San Juan's day. Where they come from and where they go are mysteries although it is known that swallows sometimes fall dead on the decks of vessels in mid-ocean.

Ramon Yorba, who has lived at the mission since he was eight years old, has seen them come and go for 69 years—and his parents before him, he relates, watched the swallows make their mysterious annual arrivel and departure.

The annual arrivel of the swallows is marked by a strange contest. As soon as they get to the mission, the birds begin a concerted drive against flocks of swifts already there, forcing the swifts out of their homes. Each year when the swallows leave in the fall, the swifts return to remain until the swallows come again.

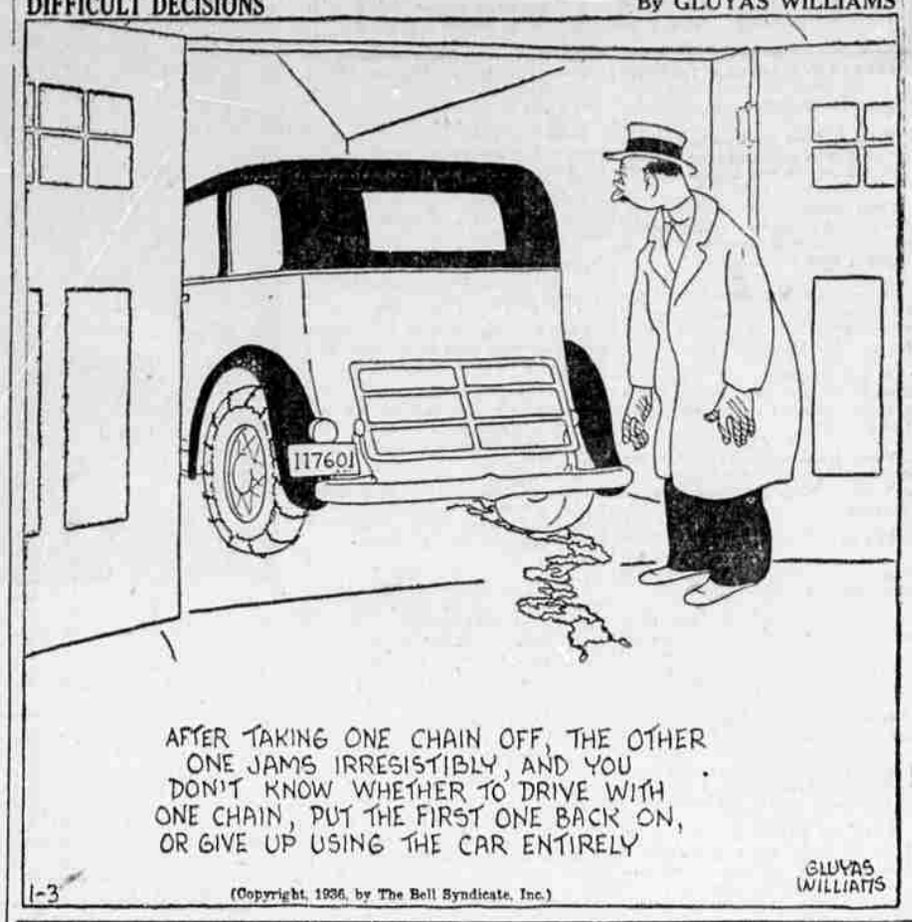
Tomorrow: Ida Lewis, Life Saver.

THEATER 'BANK NIGHT' PROTESTED BY PASTORS

ARKANSAS CITY, Kas., Jan 10.—(AP)—Arkansas City ministers started a campaign today against a Sunday "bank night" in a local theater. The ministers, complaining the feature interfered with church attendance, asked City Attorney Tom Pringle for a ruling on legality of the prize drawing.

DIFFICULT DECISIONS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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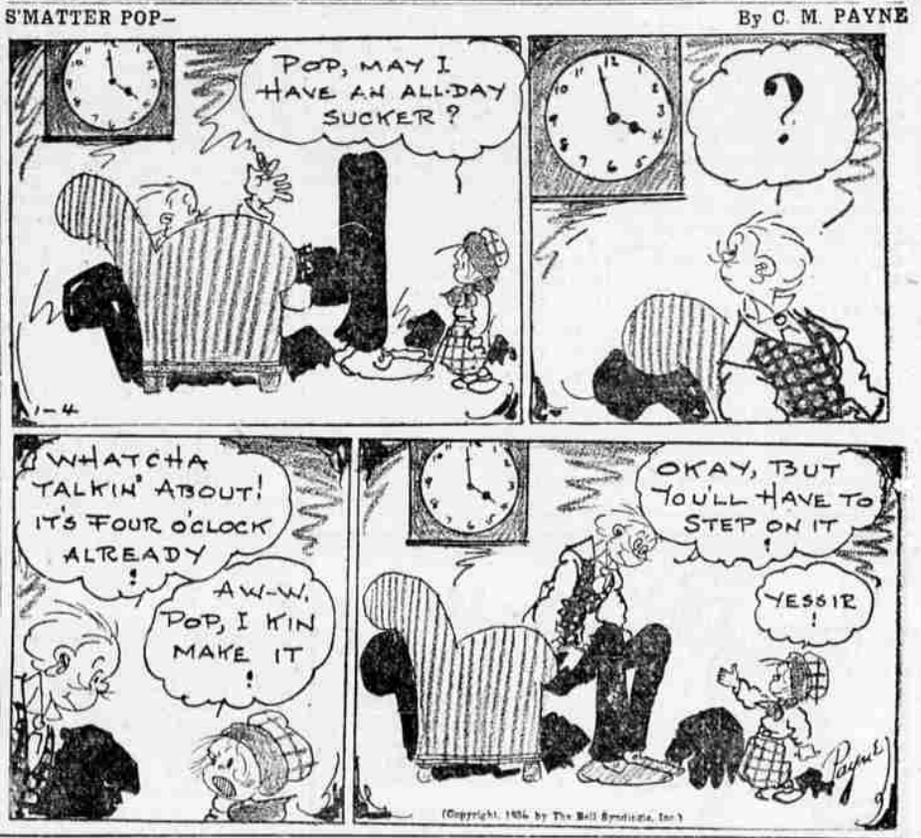
S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Paul Is Worried!

By HAL FORREST

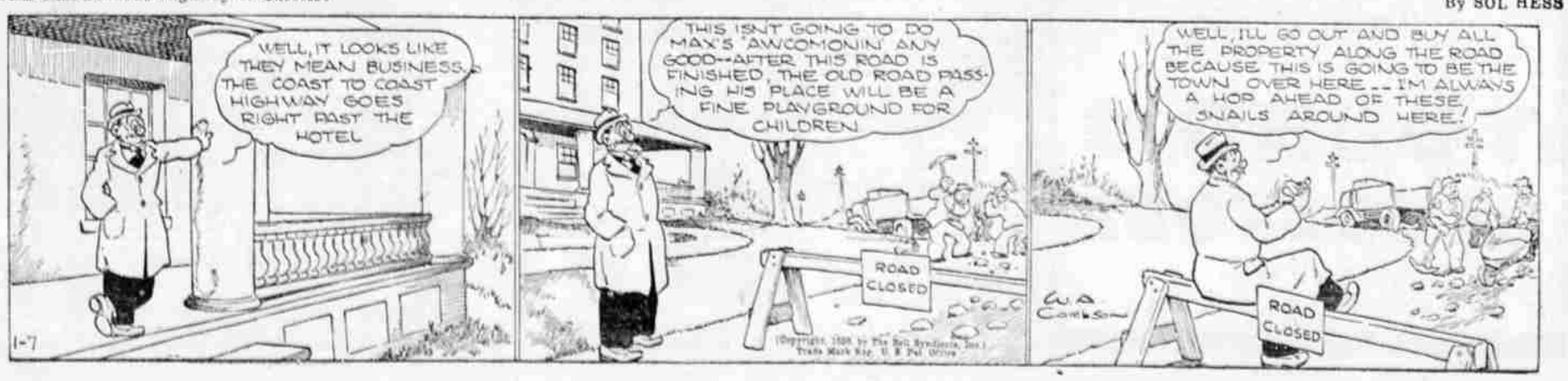
BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Crip's Ruse!

By EDWIN ALGER

(© 1935, by Jay Jerome Williams)

THE NEBBS—The Highway to Success?

By SOL HESS



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FAIRBANKS THROUGH AS SCREEN ACTOR; SILENT ON ROMANCE

NEW YORK, Jan. 10.—(AP)—Douglas Fairbanks Sr., is through acting and has "nothing to say" about his reported romance with Lady Ashley of England.

"I'm a producer from now on," the former "Don Juan" of the screen explained in announcing he will not act again.

Arriving last night from Europe on the Aquitania, Fairbanks was asked about his marital plans.

"I have nothing to say about that," he replied.

The 52-year old actor, who used to amaze movie audiences with his athletic feats, said he would spend the next six months producing a new motion picture in California and China.

It will be the story of Marco Polo, medieval explorer and adventurer, he said, adding that he has spent years in research for it.

Fairbanks spent the last evening on the ship as host to a dozen guests including Lupe Velez, motion picture actress, and Johnny Weissmuller, her husband.

Fairbanks said his son, Douglas, Jr., is "doing very well in London," where he is a film actor.

Pioneer Merchant Dies.

PORTLAND, Jan. 10.—(AP)—McKinley Mitchell, 78, long-time merchant on the northwest's produce and grain exchange, died here yesterday. He was born in Oregon City and lived later at Gervais. He was the first carload shipper of potatoes and onions into Texas from Gervais.