

# THE BOOMERANG CLUE

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

**SYNOPSIS:** Bobby Jones and Frankie Derwent are trying very hard to find out something about a man named Bassington-French who must be implicated in the mysterious case of the man who "fell" over the cliff. But seriously enough, nobody but Bobby and Frankie think there is anything mysterious about the case, so they must proceed with caution. Frankie has verified the man's story that he was househunting, and now is pumping the police inspector.

## Chapter 14 ABOUT THE BISHOP

"ONE'S right," said the Inspector. "Photograph of his sister, it was. She came down and identified him."

"How absurd to say there were three!"

"Oh, that's easy, your ladyship. These newspaper reporters sometimes exaggerate, and sometimes they get the whole thing wrong."

"I know," said Frankie. "I've heard the wildest stories." She paused a moment, then drew freely on her imagination. "I've heard that his pockets were stuffed with papers proving him to be a Bolshevik agent. And there's another story that his pockets were full of dope, and another again about his having pockets full of counterfeit banknotes."

Bentley roared down the mews and drew up outside the garage. Bobby, in grease-stained overalls, came out to receive it. Frankie was at the wheel and beside her sat a rather gloomy-looking young man. "Hullo, Bobby," said Frankie. "This is George Arbutnot. He's a doctor and we shall need him."

Bobby winced slightly as he and George Arbutnot made faint acknowledgment of each other. "Are you sure we're going to need a doctor?" he asked. "Aren't you being a bit pessimistic?"

"I didn't mean we should need him in that way," said Frankie. "I need him for a scheme that I've got on. Look here, is there anywhere we can go and talk?"

Bobby looked doubtfully round him. "Well, there's my bedroom," he said doubtfully.

"Excellent," said Frankie. She got out of the car, and she and George Arbutnot followed Bobby up some outside steps and into a microscopic bedroom.

"I don't know," said Bobby, looking round doubtfully "if there's anywhere to sit."

There was not. The only chair was loaded with, apparently, the whole of Bobby's wardrobe.

"The bed will do," said Frankie. She plumped down on it. George Arbutnot did the same and the bed groaned protestingly.

"I've got everything planned out," said Frankie. "To begin with we want a car. One of yours will do."

"Do you mean you want to buy one of our cars?"

"Yes."

"That's really very nice of you, Frankie," said Bobby with warm appreciation. "But you needn't. I really do draw the line at sticking my friends."

"You've got it all wrong," said Frankie. "It isn't like that at all. I know what you mean—it's like buying perfectly appalling clothes and hats from one's friends who are just starting in business. A nuisance but it's got to be done. But this isn't like that at all. I really need a car."

"What about the Bentley?"

"The Bentley's no good."

"You're mad," said Bobby.

"No, I'm not. The Bentley's no good for what I want it for."

"What do you want it for?"

"Smashing it up."

Bobby groaned and put a hand to his head. "I don't seem very well this morning."

George Arbutnot spoke for the first time. His voice was deep and melancholy. "She means," he said, "that she's going to have an accident."

"How does she know?" said Bobby wildly.

Frankie gave an exasperated sigh. "Somehow or other," she said, "we seem to have started wrong. Now just listen quietly, Bobby, and try and take in what I'm going to say. I know your brains are practically negligible, but you ought to be able to understand if you really concentrate."

She paused, then resumed. "I am on the trail of Bassington-French."

"Hear, hear!"

"Bassington-French—our particular Bassington-French—lives at Merroway Court at the village of Staverley in Hampshire. Merroway Court belongs to our Bassington-French's brother, and our Bassington-French lives there with the brother and his wife."

"Whose wife?"

"The brother's wife of course. That isn't the point. The point is, how are you or I—o, both of us—going to worm ourselves into the household? I've been down and reconnoitred the ground. Staverley's a mere village. Strangers arriving there to stay would stick out a mile. It would be the sort of thing that simply isn't done. So I've evolved a plan. This is what is going to happen. Lady Frances Derwent, driving her car more recklessly than well, crashes into the wall near the gates of Merroway Court. Complete wreckage of car, less complete wreckage of Lady Frances, who is carried to the house suffering from concussion and shock and must emphatically not be moved."

"Who says so?"

"George. Now you see where George comes in. We can't risk a strange doctor's saying there is nothing the matter with me. Or perhaps some officious person might pick up my prostrate form and take it to some local hospital. No, what happens is this. George is passing along in a car (you'd better sell us a second one), sees the accident and leaps out and takes charge."

"The Inspector laughed heartily. "That's a good one."

"I suppose really he had just the usual things in his pockets?"

"And very few at that. A handkerchief, not marked. Some loose change, a packet of cigars and a couple of Treasury notes—loose, not in a case. No letters. We'd have had a job to identify him if it hadn't been for the photo. Provisional, you might call it."

"I wonder," said Frankie.

In view of her private knowledge, she considered "provisional" a singularly inapposite word. She changed the conversation.

"I went to see Mr. Jones, the Vicar's son, yesterday. The one who's been poisoned. What an extraordinary thing that was!"

"Ah!" said the Inspector. "Now that is extraordinary. If you like. Never heard of anything like it happening before. A nice young gentleman without an enemy in the world, or so you'd say. You know, Lady Frances, there are some queer customers going about. All the same I never heard of a homicidal maniac who acted just this way."

"Is there any clue at all to who did it?" Frankie was all wide-eyed inquiry. "It's so interesting to hear all this," she added.

The Inspector swelled with gratification. He enjoyed this friendly conversation with an Earl's daughter. Nothing stuck up or snobbish about Lady Frances.

"There was a car seen in the vicinity," said the Inspector. "Dark-blue Talbot. A man on Lock's Corner reported dark-blue Talbot No. GG 8282 passed going direction St. Botolph's."

"And you think—"

"GG 8282 is the number of the Bishop of St. Botolph's car."

Frankie toyed for a minute or two with the idea of a homicidal bishop who offered sacrifices of clergymen's sons but rejected it with a sigh. "You don't suspect the Bishop, I suppose?" she said.

"We've found out that the Bishop's car never left the Palace garage that afternoon."

"So it was a false number."

"Yes. We've got that to go on all right."

With expressions of admiration Frankie took her leave. She made no damping remark, but she thought to herself, "There must be a large number of dark-blue Talbots in England."

On her return home she took a directory of Marchbolt from its place on the writing-table in the library and removed it to her own room. She worked over it for some hours. The result was not satisfactory. There were four hundred and eighty-two Evases in Marchbolt.

"Damn!" said Frankie.

She began to make plans for the future.

A WEEK later Bobby had joined Badger in London. He had received several enigmatical communications from Frankie, mostly in such an illegible scrawl that he was quite unable to do more than guess at their meaning.

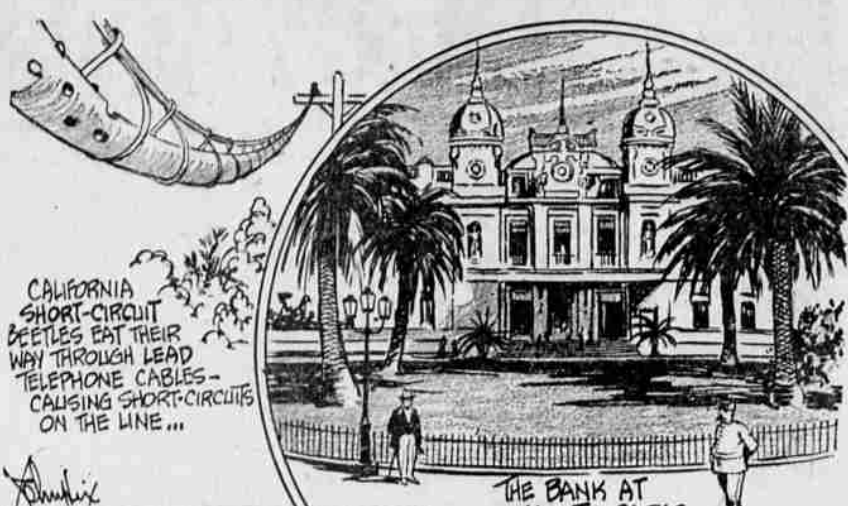
Meanwhile the young man remained very strictly on his guard. The effect of eight grains of morphia was to render their taker extremely suspicious of food and drink and had also induced him to bring to London a service revolver, the possession of which was extremely irksome to him.

He was just beginning to feel that the whole thing had been an extravagant nightmare when Frank-

Frankie buys, tomorrow, a very bad car indeed.

# STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HLA.

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



THE BANK AT MONTE CARLO HAS NEVER BEEN BROKEN!



RUFUS KING—WHO, AT 14, WON THE FIRST GRAND AMERICAN TRAPSHOOT HE WAS EVER IN, 5 YEARS LATER WON 3 HOLES AND PAIRED 2 IN THE FIRST FIVE AGAINST CHAMPION LAWSON LITTLE IN THE AMERICAN AMATEUR GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP...—Cleveland, 1935—



DAVID HENSON—Piedmont, Mo., HAS BEEN USING THE SAME RAZOR FOR 72 YEARS—HE BOUGHT IT FOR HIS FIRST SHAVE IN 1864.



WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT THE PERFECT GUM THE FLAVOR LASTS

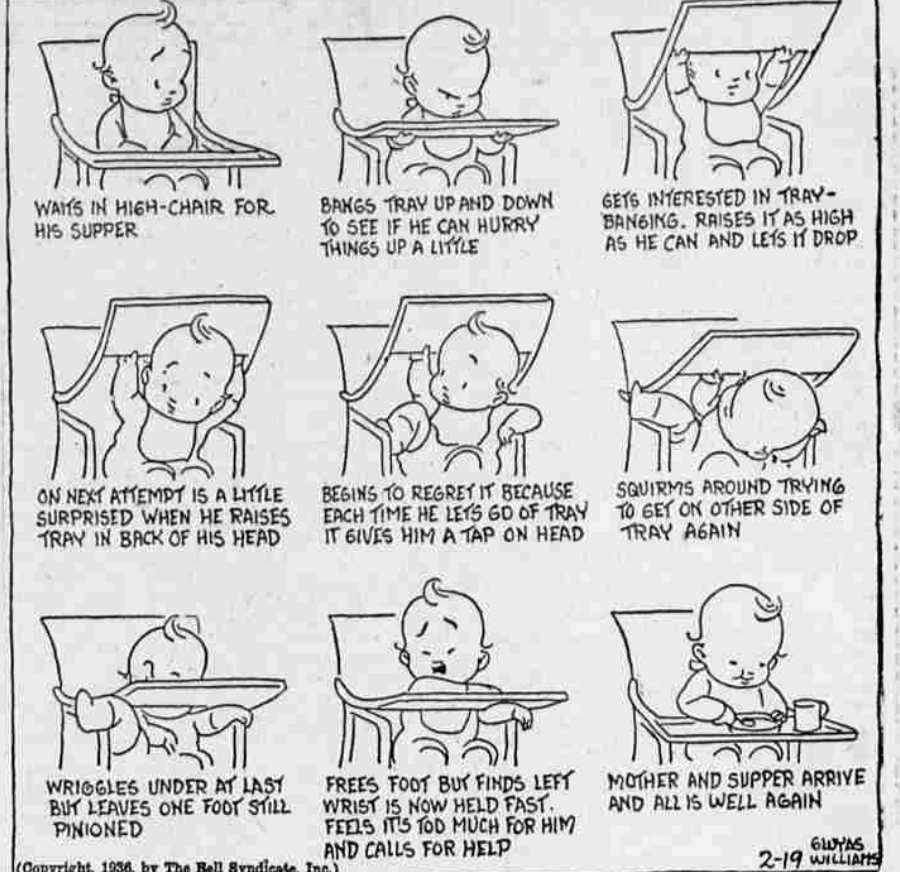
The man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo exists only in fiction, for the bank at Monte Carlo has never been broken. Bet limits and the fact that the gambling concern has plenty of financial backing indicate that the man who breaks the bank is not likely to become a reality for some time to come.

The term "breaking the bank" is erroneously used at one particular table. This is merely the amount of money allotted to that table at the start of the day. It varies, according to the stakes and game. A roulette table at Monte Carlo is usually started off with about \$13,000. If somebody wins all of it he is said to have "broken the bank"—but he has not, for the bank always supplies more, sometimes before even the original amount has been lost.

This taking all the money at any one table is a rather common occurrence—and some players have taken it several times in a single day. This comparatively small amount of cash at each table is called the "bank," but it is really only a very small branch of the real bank—for the bank of Monte Carlo is backed by millions of dollars.

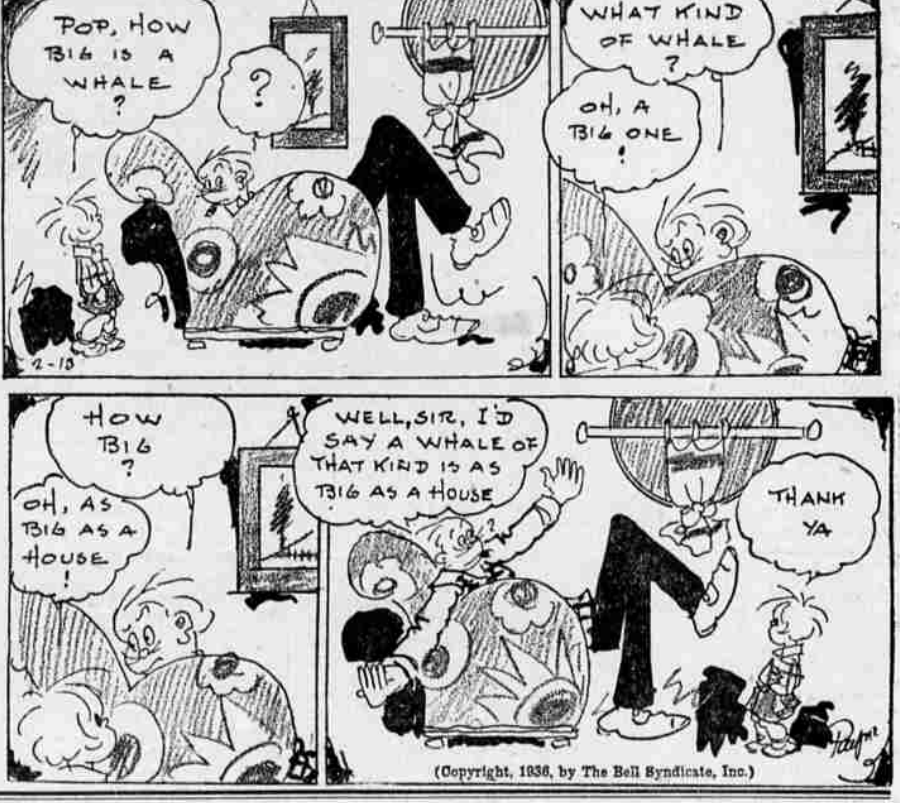
Strange as it seems, 14-year-old Monday: The Fortune Accident. Be correctly cosseted in an Artist Model by Ethelwyn B. Hoffmann

# TRAY SERVICE—By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



(Copyright, 1936, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

# SMATTER POP—By C. M. PAYNE



(Copyright, 1936, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

# TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Landing in the Desert of Desolation!



HAL FORREST

# BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Rescue!



EDWIN ALGERP

# THE NEBBS—Cruel World



SOL HESS

# TWO SERIOUSLY HURT IN AUTOMOBILE CRASH

ROSEBURG, Ore., Feb. 18.—(AP)—Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Cullen of Portland were brought to Mercy hospital here last night suffering from critical injuries resulting from an automobile accident near Drain. Raymond N. Dean, Gold Beach; Jarley Pete, Marshfield, and Mary Ella Carey, Coquille, suffered cuts and bruises but were not seriously hurt.

Cars driven by Murphy and Dean skidded into a collision on icy pavement, practically demolishing both automobiles.

BUCKINGHAM'S Ice Cream Candy and Party Specials, The Great 236 So Central.

See Mail Tribune want ads.

# SPANISH PRISONERS STAGE WILD RIOTS

MADRID, Feb. 18.—(AP)—Prison riots flared across Spain today in the wake of the national election won by extremists whose principal campaign plank was amnesty for participants in the 1934 socialistic rebellion.

Ten persons have been killed in riots inside and out of prisons.

Following riots in the prisons at Cartagena, Valencia, Saragosa, and Burgos, in which two are known to have been slain and a score wounded, the prisoners in the Gijon city jail mutinied.

WINDOW GLASS—we sell window glass and will replace your broken windows responsibly. Truebridge Cabinet Works.