

THE BOOMERANG CLUE

Chapter 1: MEAN TRICK

GEORGE, darling, this won't blight your career, will it? Frankie asked. "They won't strike you off the register, or whatever it is, will they?"

"Probably," said George gloomily. "That is, if it ever comes out."

"It won't," said Frankie. "Don't worry, George. I shan't let you down." She added thoughtfully, "You did it very well, I've never heard you talk so much before."

George sighed. He looked at his watch. "I shall give my examination another three minutes," he said.

"What about the car?"

"I'll arrange with a garage to have that cleared up."

"George," said Frankie, "you've been an angel. I don't know why you did it."

"No more do I," said George. "Damn fool thing to do."

He nodded to her.

"Bye-bye. Enjoy yourself."

"I wonder if I shall," said Frankie. She was thinking of that cool impersonal voice with the slight American accent.

George went in search of the owner of it, whom he found waiting for him in the drawing-room.

"Well," he said abruptly, "I'm glad to say it's not so bad as I feared. Concussion very slight and already passing off. She ought to stay quietly where she is for a day or so, though." He paused. "She seems to be a Lady Frances Derwent."

"Oh, fancy!" said Mrs. Bassington-French. "Then I know some cousins of hers, the Draycoits, quite well."

"I don't know if it's inconvenient for you to have her here," said George. "But if she could stay where she was for a day or two—"

George paused.

"Oh, of course. That will be quite all right, Dr—"

"Arbutnot. By the way, I'll see to the car business. I shall be passing a garage."

"Thank you very much, Dr. Arbutnot. How very lucky you happened to be passing! I suppose a doctor ought to see her to-morrow just to see she's getting on all right."

"Don't think it's necessary," said George. "All she needs is quiet."

"I see. But her people ought to know."

"I'll attend to that," said George.

WELL here I am, thought Frankie. "Safely in the enemy's camp. Now it's up to me."

There was a tap on the door and Mrs. Bassington-French entered. Frankie raised herself a little on her pillows.

"I'm so frightfully sorry," she said in a faint voice. "Causing you all this bother."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Bassington-French. "Frankie heard news that cool, attractive, drawing voice with a slight American accent, and remembered that Lord Marchington had said that one of the Hampshire Bassington-Frenches had married an American heiress. Dr. Arbutnot says you will be quite all right in a day or two if you just keep quiet."

"He seems nice," she said. "He was very kind."

"He seemed a most capable young man," said Mrs. Bassington-French. "It was very fortunate that he just happened to be passing."

"Yes, wasn't it?"

"But you mustn't talk," continued her hostess. "I'll send my maid along with some things for you and then she can get you properly into bed."

"It's frightfully kind of you."

"Not at all."

Frankie felt a momentary qualm as the other woman withdrew.

"A nice kind creature," she said to herself. "And beautifully unsuspecting."

For the first time she felt that she was playing a mean trick on her hostess.

"Oh, well," thought Frankie. "I've got to go through with it now. But I wish she hadn't been so nice about it."

She spent a dull afternoon and evening lying in her darkened room. Mrs. Bassington-French looked in once or twice to see how she was, but she did not stay.

The next day, however, Frankie

admitted the daylight and expressed a desire for company and her hostess came and sat with her for some time. They discovered many common acquaintances and friends, and by the end of that day Frankie felt, with a guilty qualm, that they had become friends.

Mrs. Bassington-French referred several times to her husband and to her small boy, Tommy. She seemed a simple woman, deeply attached to her home; yet for some reason or other Frankie fancied that she was not quite happy. There was an anxious expression in her eyes sometimes that did not argue a mind at peace with itself.

On the third day Frankie got up and was introduced to the master of the house.

He was a big man, heavily-jeweled, with a kindly but rather abstract air. He seemed to spend a good deal of his time shut up in his study. Yet Frankie judged him to be very fond of his wife, though interesting himself very little in her concerns.

Tommy, the small boy, was seven and a healthy, mischievous child Sylvia Bassington-French obviously adored him.

"It's so nice down here," said Frankie with a sigh. She was lying out on a long chair in the garden "I don't know whether it's the ban on the head, or what it is, but I just don't feel I want to move. I'd like to lie here for days and days."

"Well, do," said Sylvia Bassington-French in her calm, incurious tones. "No, really, I mean it. Don't hurry back to town. You see," she went on, "it's a great pleasure to me to have you here. You're so bright and amusing. It quite cheers me up."

"So she needs cheering up," flashed across Frankie's mind. At the same time she felt ashamed of herself.

"I feel we really have become friends," continued the other woman.

FRANKIE felt still more ashamed. It was a mean thing she was doing—mean—mean—mean. She would give it up! Go back to town—

Her hostess went on. "It won't be too dull here. To-morrow my brother-in-law is coming back. You'll like him, I'm sure. Everyone likes Roger."

"He lives with you?"

"Oh, and on. He's a restless creature. He calls himself the ne'er-do-well of the family, and perhaps it's true in a way. He never sticks to a job for long—in fact I don't believe he's ever done any real work in his life. But some people just are like that—especially in old families. And they're usually people with a great charm of manner. Roger is wonderfully sympathetic. I don't know what I should have done without him this Spring when Tommy was ill."

"What was the matter with Tommy?"

"He had a bad fall from the swing it must have been tied on to a rotten branch, and the branch gave way. Roger was very much upset because he was swinging the child at the time—you know, giving him high ones such as children love. We thought at first Tommy's spine was hurt, but it turned out to be a very slight injury and he's quite all right now."

"He certainly looks it," said Frankie, smiling, as she heard faint yells and whoops in the distance. "I know. He seems in perfect condition. It's such a relief. He's had bad luck in accidents. He was nearly drowned last winter."

"Was he really?" said Frankie thoughtfully.

She no longer meditated returning to town. The feeling of guilt had abated. Accidents! Did Roger Bassington-French specialize in accidents, she wondered.

She said: "If you're sure you mean it, I'll love to stay a little longer. But won't your husband mind my butting in like this?"

"Henry? Mr. Bassington-French's lips curled in a strange expression. "No, Henry won't mind. Henry never minds anything—nowadays."

Frankie looked at her curiously. "If she knew me better she'd tell me something," she thought to herself. "I believe there are lots of odd things going on in this household."

Henry Bassington-French joined them for tea, and Frankie studied him closely. There was certainly something odd about the man. His type was an obvious one—a jovial, sport-loving, simple country gentleman.

But such a man ought not to sit twitching nervously, his nerves obviously on edge.

Frankie meets Roger Bassington-French to-morrow.

40, probably will not recover. Mrs. Dillon, 36, and six children ranging in age from 3 to 12, are in a serious condition.

They were found in their mountain cabin, three miles from the hill village of Husbald and brought to a home there. A doctor said it would be impossible to move the stricken family to a hospital.

Dameron said Gladys was arrested because she was the only one who did not partake of the poisoned bread.

"It seems the girl had left home without permission, and her mother punished her by confining her to the home. She said in her confession she was angry with her mother and fully intended to kill her."

"Gladys broke down and cried when I told her how sick her father was."

"She said, 'I didn't mean to hurt him, just mamma.'"

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THE NEBBS—What Will the Harvest Be?

RUDY, IS IT TRUE ABOUT THE RUMOR GOING AROUND ABOUT SELLING THIS HOTEL?

YOU BET IT IS! I WOULDN'T STAY IN BUSINESS WITH THIS DOUBLE-CROSSING SUIZER! I WOULDN'T LIVE IN THE SAME TOWN WITH HIM—I WOULDN'T LIVE IN THE SAME WORLD WITH HIM. IF THERE WAS ANOTHER ONE I COULD GO TO WITH—OUT SUICIDE!!

NEBB YOU'VE BEEN A FINE FRIEND OF MINE AND I APPRECIATE IT AND I'M TELLING YOU THAT YOU'RE WALKING OUT ON A FINE BUSINESS—A HAPPY LIFE, FOR WHAT? WELL, WHO KNOWS?

PUNISHED GIRL POISONS FAMILY TO GAIN REVENGE

HAMLIN, W. Va., Feb. 22.—(AP)—A family of eight lay critically ill from poisoning today in a hill country home, their illness brought on by what prosecutor W. S. Dameron said was a 14-year old daughter's retaliation for a misstatement.

Dameron said Gladys Dillon admitted mixing poison with the flour her mother used in baking bread. He said she told him she intended only to poison the mother.

The prosecutor said Edgar Dillon,

TOWNSEND AFTER TWO OLD PARTIES

GLENDALE, Calif., Feb. 22.—(AP)—Dr. Francis E. Townsend today urged elimination of the "American system of dual party government."

Dr. Townsend, originator of the old age pension plan bearing his name, said in an interview that regardless of whether his plan is adopted, the "more than 7,000 Townsend clubs in the United States" will be used in attack on the existing party organization.

In his place Dr. Townsend advocated a return to the "Town meetings" of early American days, offering his clubs as the basis of such a government.

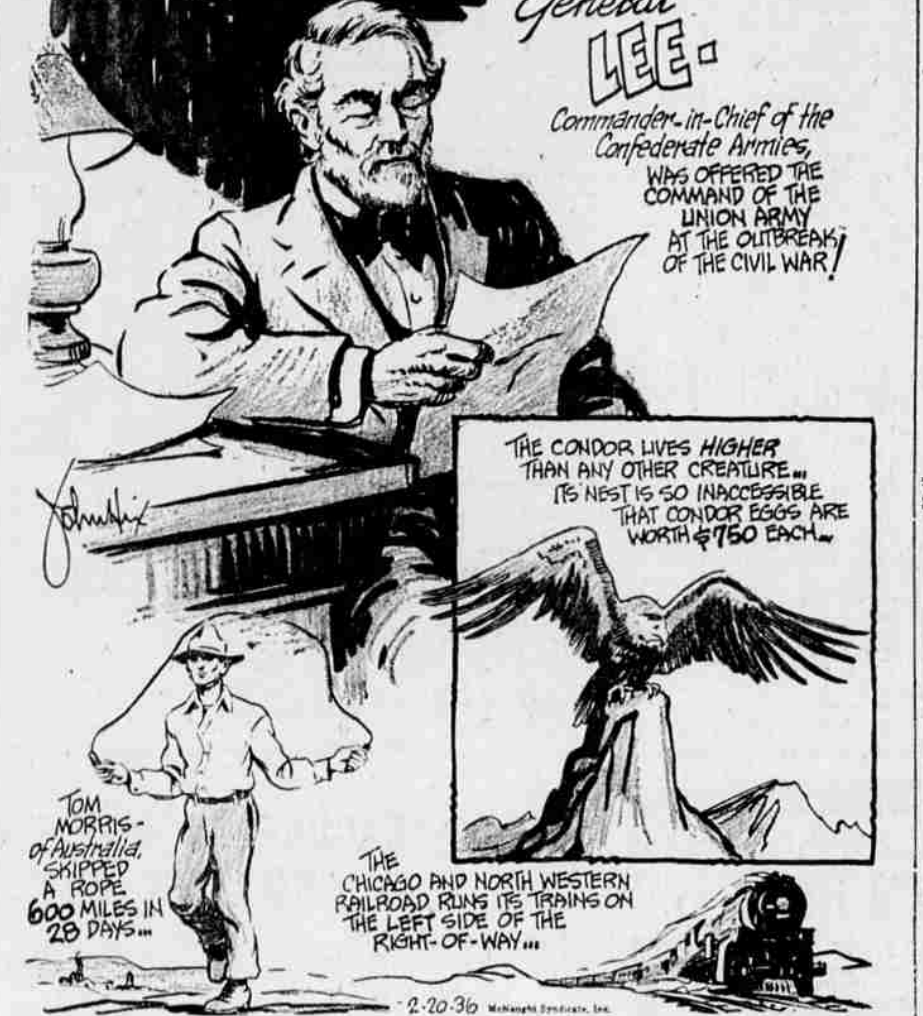
"The two party system is not democracy, and never was," said Dr. Townsend.

Women Given Damages
ASTORIA, Ore., Feb. 22.—(AP)—A circuit court jury here awarded Lucille Anderson of Portland \$8,320 as a result of an auto accident south of here last April. Defendant was Edward Fenlon of Portland. The plaintiff alleged she incurred injuries.

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STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



Strange as it seems, General Robert E. Lee was offered the command of both the great American armies that opposed each other in the Civil war. When it appeared that actual war would soon break out between the North and the South, President Lincoln, through a spokesman, offered Lee command of the armies of the North. Lee declined.

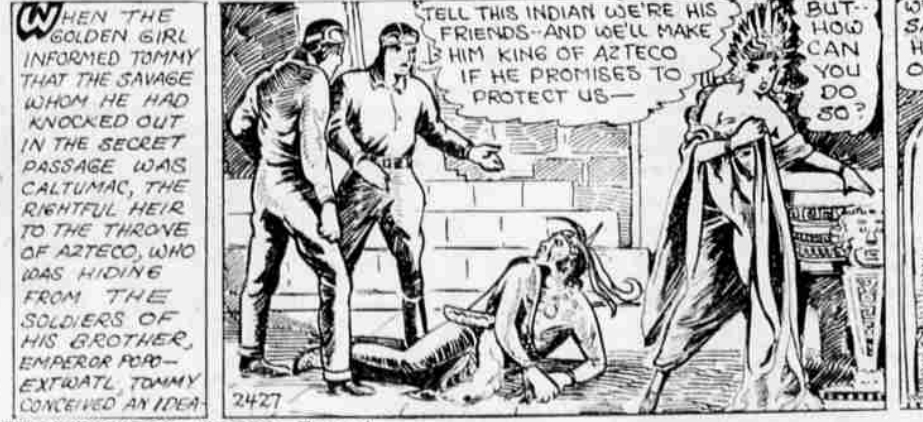
Though opposed to secession and deprecating war, I could take no part in an invasion of the southern states," he later explained.

At that time Lee did not know that he would lead the Southern armies.

French and Dutch interests built some of America's early railroads, and English engineers put them into operation. Following the custom of their country, the Englishmen ran the trains on the left side where double tracking was used. Although this has largely been changed to right hand operation now, there are still lines on the Chicago and Northwestern and the New York Central where the old system is used. Both systems have their advantages—and to change from one to the other would entail enormous expense.

Tomorrow: Fatal Friday the Thirteenth.

FAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeets Not Interested in Politics!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Escape!

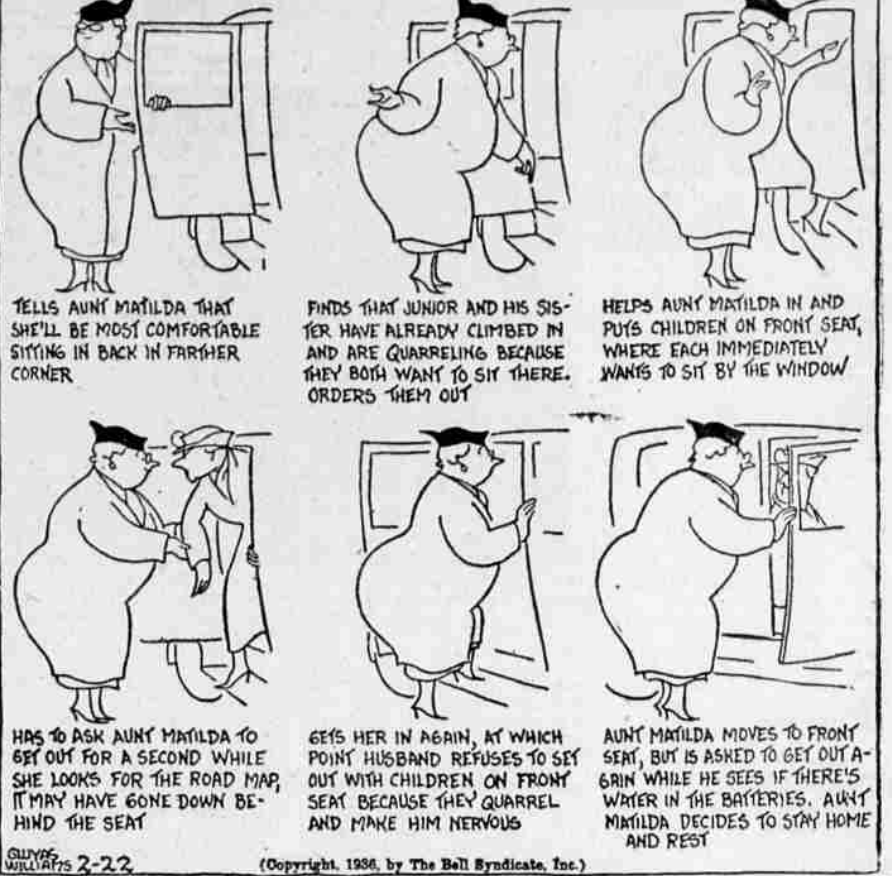


THE NEBBS—What Will the Harvest Be?



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