

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

...gins' door for the faint sound of his breathing. Cook's door was still closed, but I was taking no chances. I pushed it open and satisfied myself that she had not returned to her room. Then, feeling my way carefully, I started down the back stairs.

The mumble of voices was lower and more indistinct. I could no longer distinguish one from the other, let alone any of the words. Slowly I crept down until the turn of the landing brought me within full view of the kitchen, where I halted, open-mouthed.

William stood at the end of the kitchen table, leaning over talking excitedly to Annie, who was sitting beside him. Beyond them in a spacious rocking chair, her eyes glittering and her large hands clenched tightly in her lap, sat Cook. She was not talking, but she was listening spellbound to the other two.

"Is it proof enough?" I was obliged to exert every ounce of balance I could command to avoid falling over the banisters in my eagerness to hear Annie's whisper. "If we was to fall through with this, he could make it awful hot for us. There ain't many jobs, Bill. You'd oughta know that."

William brought his fist down on the table expressively but without sound. "The guys like us is the ones that'll get blamed. It took me three years to learn that. And here's another thing. We got enough evidence on Higgins to send him to the chair tomorrow!"

"You're in a tight spot!"

At this moment I leaned too heavily upon the railing. It wasn't a very loud squeak, but William spun around. I tried to flatten myself against the wall, but I had been discovered.

I stuck my hands into my pocket, and ambled down the stairs.

"What I'd like to know, William," I said, "is what you just said. Some thing about evidence against Higgins, wasn't it?"

With a ridiculous pretense of calm, I seated myself on the table, my back to the massive figure of Cook. "If you'll take my tip, William, you'll get the whole story off your chest. What do you know about Higgins?"

"He was gripping the table as if he meant to smash it to pieces."

"What makes you think I know anything?"

"You do," I strove to keep my voice level. "You're full of surprises. What, for example, do you know about Higgins that would send him to the chair?"

I pitied the fellow. His eyes were bloodshot and his face was drawn. You can't prove I said nothing. You can't prove nothing. I ain't going to talk.

I took a long shot in the dark. "As a matter of fact, William," I said, "I can prove several interesting things about you. And it so happens that my evidence is very fine evidence indeed. And it won't do you any good to dispose of me in order to get hold of it."

"Cook, I really believe, would have throttled me at that point. If William's arm had not sent her hurtling back into her chair, he drew a long breath. "All right," he said faintly. "What are you going to do?"

I shoved a chair at him with my foot. "Sit down," I said. "and tell me about it. It's all bound to come out anyway."

He sat heavily. Annie was beginning to cry.

"I been three years in the pen," his voice was slow and dazed. "It was driving me for the Bishops and a ring was pinched. They pinned it on me. The old man felt sorry for me and got me a job here with Miss Barbara. I ain't done a thing—but it's gonna look bad."

He was mumbling as if in his sleep, and his voice was weary, hopeless and sick.

"Did anyone but Miss Barbara know about this—anyone in the house, I mean?"

He shook his head drearily. "Miss Judith knew."

"Judith? It was going to look bad! And yet for the Bishops and a ring was pinched. They pinned it on me. The old man felt sorry for me and got me a job here with Miss Barbara. I ain't done a thing—but it's gonna look bad."

"You know better than I do that you're in a tight spot. Your only way out is to find the guilty man."

Cook's roar this time brought me to my feet.

"Damn you!" she bellowed. "Damn you for a lying devil! Leave him alone!"

"Suppose you finish the story, William," I said.

His blazing eyes snapped from Cook's face to mine. For an instant I thought I would be obliged to fight my way out, but only for an instant. William's eyes fell and he sank back into his chair.

"All right, then," his words were barely audible. "Cook knew it—and my wife."

An entirely new train of thought was popping into my head.

"By that you mean Annie?"

"Yes."

The silence in the kitchen was unbroken. Annie had ceased to sniffle. I was doing some rapid thinking.

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I get William to talk about Higgins, tomorrow.

Chapter 39 The Letters Vanish

In the darkness I struggled to my knees, listening to rapid feet coming through the bathroom from Farrington's room. I was discovered, but I didn't care. Rocking back and forth on my knees, I waited for the light to come through that door and disclose the body of Cook. I almost thought that I could see it in front of me without the light.

The door came open with a bang. Michael stood on the threshold, a heavy silver box raised in his hand as a weapon. At the sight of me, his mouth dropped open. Slowly, fascinated, I swung my eyes down in the path of light streaming through the bathroom door. They rested on an ordinary rag rug, one end of which had been kicked up in the air—in all probability by my own foot. The other end was held firmly to the floor by a leg of the Skipper's bed. Or bodies—or traces of them—there was not a sign.

"What are you doing now?" said Michael blankly.

I was becoming aware of a banged elbow and a barked shin, and I was also conscious of the picture I cut there on my hands and knees.

"Playing potsy!" I said. "Any suggestions?"

I stepped over to a stand and switched on a light.

"Are you hurt?" he inquired without too much interest.

I got clumsily to my feet. "I'll barely live."

Michael surveyed me thoughtfully. "Suppose we go into the other room?" he said.

I went. The indignity of my position momentarily seemed more important to me than the mysterious disappearance of Cook. M. Farrington was sitting in a chair, clad in one of her eternal lavender wrappers, sharp eyes on my face. Gay sprang on the bed, coiled up on one elbow, her attitude thoroughly alert.

I addressed myself to Gay, the least disconcerting of my audience.

"Where's Annie?" I said.

But M. Farrington was not to be ignored. "Annie," she declaimed, "is still looking for the glasses which are over there on the dressing table. Would you mind telling us what you were doing?"

"Someone got to William's room before I did," I said, not pausing to ask whether or not they had told her the whole story. But M. Farrington had been missing no tricks.

"How do you know? Were the letters gone?"

"The letters," I said quickly. "Mike has them, haven't you, Mike?"

Michael's hand went to his pockets, and on through his vest and trouser pockets.

"Gay has them," he said.

Three pairs of eyes swung to Gay's face. It was blank.

"But I haven't. You have them yourself, Mike. You took them from Jimmie."

There was silence.

"Michael," said M. Farrington crisply, "search the hall. You may have dropped them in your excitement."

It was a forlorn hope, but it was the only one. Mike went on the gallop. M. Farrington took command of the situation.

A Little Eavesdropping

Now, James, you have not explained what you were doing in Barbara's room. Don't look so vague. I tried to do as I was told. As calmly as I could, I told her what I had discovered. Gay gasped once and, when I came to the episode of the rug, giggled nervously. But M. Farrington's gimlet eyes never left my face.

"Why didn't you go down to the kitchen?" she snapped before I had drawn a breath on my last period.

"I couldn't hear her. You can always hear Cook, and—"

"Humph!" said M. Farrington cryptically just as Mike came through the door.

His face told the story long before his tongue could.

"Didn't find a thing."

"I guess it's time we looked at that kitchen," I said.

M. Farrington's smile was sardonic. "Are you quite sure, James?"

I was.

The smaller corridor was still in semi-darkness. I listened outside of

Trade Divisions Report Increase

NEW YORK, June 19.—(AP)—Most divisions of trade succeeded in surmounting increasing handicaps to progress this week, Dun & Bradstreet said today in the weekly review of business.

"Accumulated summer requirements, spurred by warmer weather, imparted a faster momentum to retail trade," the agency said. "The broader flow of re-orders to wholesalers, for seasonal goods revealed the cautious policy merchants have followed in building inventories. An extension of the strike map resulted in temporary unsettlement of production schedules, but industries outside the affected zones maintained previous operating rates."

The agency estimated retail output for the country as a whole at from 3 to 6 percent above the preceding week and 12 to 20 percent better than a year ago. Individual gains in the major areas were: New England 10 to

Employers Held Not Acting Right

NEW YORK, June 19.—(AP)—Senator Robert F. Wagner, (D-N.Y.) author of the national labor relations act declared today refusal of employers to sign collective bargaining agreements may be a violation of the law through "bad faith."

"Anti-union employers have long refused to enter into written contracts with unions as a token of their adamant determination not to accord to the properly selected representatives of their workers the same dignity and standing which they accord to others with whom they do business."

Senator Wagner asserted that "this practice must be crushed before we can have industrial peace."

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

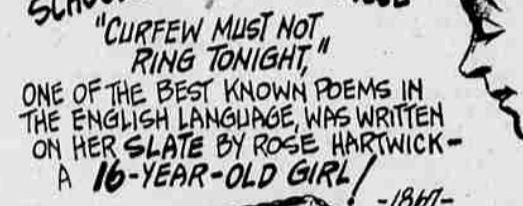
For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



THE CASTLE ON A BRIDGE - CHENONCEAUX CASTLE AT TOURNAI, FRANCE



TOBACCO CONTAINS MORE CITRIC ACID THAN GRAPEFRUIT!



THE SCHOOLGIRL'S MASTERPIECE "CURFEW MUST NOT RING TONIGHT," ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN POEMS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, WAS WRITTEN ON HER SLATE BY ROSE HARTWICK—A 16-YEAR-OLD GIRL!—1847

Schoolgirl's Masterpiece
England's sun was slowly setting
O'er the hill tops far away,
Filling all the land with beauty at
the close of one sad day;
And its last rays kissed the forehead
of a man and maiden fair,
He with steps so slow and weary, she
with sunny, floating hair;
He with bowed head, sad and
thoughtful; she, with lips, all cold
and white,
Struggled to keep back the murmur:
"Curfew must not ring tonight!"

A girl of 16 added the quote, after
tonight" on her writing slate and
started off on the second stanza of
a poem that was to become one of the
most popular dramatic pieces in the
English language. It was "The Curfew
Bell," better known today as

"Curfew Must Not Ring Tonight."
Its young composer was Rose Hartwick,
a high school student of Litchfield,
Michigan.
Written in April, 1867, the poem
was forgotten for a while, then picked
up several years later and published in
a Detroit newspaper. An overnight
sensation, it was re-published through
America, went to England, was translated
into various foreign languages, and
eventually became internationally
recognized as a classic.

Married to Edmund Thorpe, a writer,
in 1871, Rose Hartwick Thorpe
struggled along in poverty for several
years before her later literary efforts
brought in a stable income. She did
not make a cent on the poem which
made her famous, "The Curfew Bell."

Prejudice Charged
KIAMATHI FALLS, June 19.—(AP)—
An affidavit of prejudice against
Circuit Judge Edward B. Ashurst was
filed today by attorneys for J. E.
Windle, Portland broker.

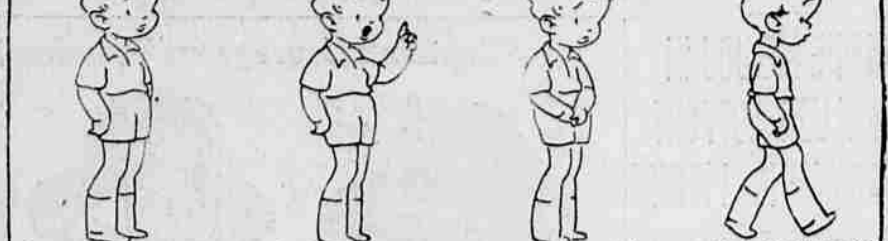
First Church Bell
NEWBERG, June 19.—(AP)—A
PWA historical record shows the bell
placed in the church in the St. Paul
mission, now the site of the town
of St. Paul, is the first church bell
to be brought to Oregon and one
of the first in the west.

Japs Attack Bandits
TOKYO, June 19.—(AP)—The
Dome (Japanese) news agency re-
ported today Japanese had attacked
200 Chinese bandits near Harbin,
Manchoukuo, killing 90 and seizing
many rifles in an eight-hour battle.

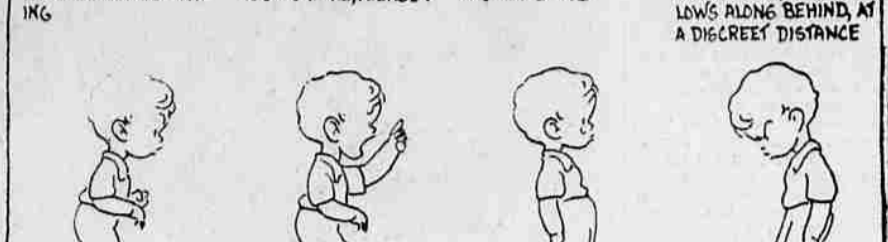
SALEM, June 19.—(AP)—Governor
Martin revoked today the conditional
pardon granted three years ago to Joe
Sherman, convicted in Baker county
for assault and robbery and sentenced
to 10 years in prison.

LITTLE BROTHER

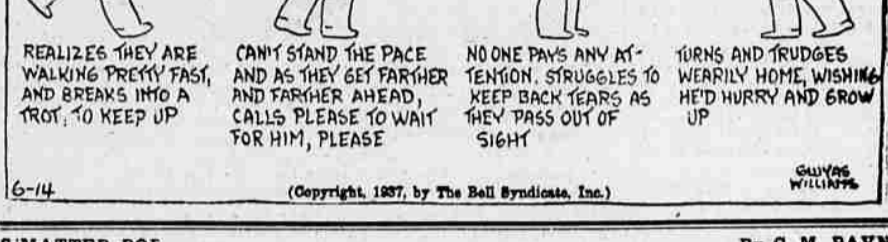
By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



BIG BROTHER IS HAILED BY REST OF OLDER BOYS TO COME AND GO FISHING



AS THEY START OFF, CALLS HE WANTS TO GO, TOO! CAN HE, PLEASE?



CHORUS FROM BROTHER AND OTHER BOYS ANSWERS NO



MUMMERS THEY HAVEN'T ANY RIGHT TO KEEP HIM FROM GOING, AND FOLLOWING ALONG BEHIND, AT A DISCREET DISTANCE



REALIZES THEY ARE WALKING PRETTY FAST, AND BREAKS INTO A TROT, TO KEEP UP



CAN'T STAND THE PACE AND AS THEY GET FARTHER AND FARTHER AHEAD, CALLS PLEASE TO WAIT FOR HIM, PLEASE



NO ONE PAYS ANY ATTENTION, STRUGGLES TO KEEP BACK TEARS AS THEY PASS OUT OF SIGHT



TURNS AND TRUDGES WEARILY HOME, WISHING HE'D HURRY AND GROW UP

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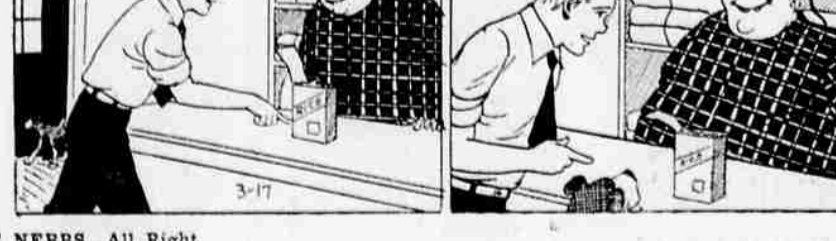
S'MATTER POP

By C. M. PAYNE



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Surprise Due for Tommy!



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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Wow an Idea

By EDWIN ALGER



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THE NEBBS—All Right

By SOL HESS



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