

The Boxwood Barrier

By BLANCHE SMITH FERGUSON

The Story So Far: Loving someone else, gently bred Judith Goodloe marries Reuben Oliver—self-made man and outsider—for his money, only to discover that his fortune is lost. But Judith's code insists that she stick to her marriage and follow Reuben to a dismal mining town, Fordney's Gulch, Nevada. Unfettered for poverty, there are times she hates Reuben bitterly, and he knows it. It is Thanksgiving, with nothing to be thankful for.

Chapter 23 Only Half Alive

A GOOD quarrel would have cleared the atmosphere but they were so careful, so very careful to avoid even a remote hint of one. Perhaps neither could have told why they feared an eruption even while they longed for one that would rock the earth.

"Hurry and change, Reuben," Judith filled a bud vase with water, put the zirconium in it and placed it in the center of a small table richly laid with damask, silver, crystal, "I'll keep the things warm until you're ready."

Despite their combined efforts it was not a festive meal. The disheartened turkey was quite tasteless from too long hours spent in a steamer. The cranberry jelly was leathery. The potatoes soggy. "While they were pretending to enjoy themselves Mrs. Kraus came bustling in with a platter of piping hot home cooked turkey. The skin was golden brown, the meat tender, juicy. The dressing and gravy savory dreams.

"If I could cook like that!" Judith envied.

"You could, if you tried hard enough," the woman told her. "The Row feels sorry for Mr. Oliver."

"Sorry?"

The woman nodded. "It ain't right for a man to have to do outside work and inside too, so when I saw him coming with a basket—"

The neighbors felt sorry—not for her—for Reuben. They felt sorry for Reuben—

"I'm afraid I wasn't cut out for a miner's wife," Judith said when they returned to their interrupted meal. "This turkey is worth a few insults."

Judith tried valiantly to capture the holiday spirit, so did Reuben. They tried too hard. Perhaps that was why it eluded them.

They had so pitifully little in common. Judith tried to take an interest in Reuben's work, but he hated the mine, so did Reuben. He would have talked of their days in Maryland, but the subject always led to regrets and hurt feelings, so they spoke brightly of impersonal things.

"I had a letter from Jim," Reuben remembered suddenly and felt his pockets. "Left it in my other coat."

"What did he say?"

"Hugo is fine. Jim has been hunting with him a lot this autumn." He wanted to add that he hoped to send for Hugo soon, but planning for the future was taboo because Reuben visioned largely—a panorama of vast proportions. Some day he would buy back Five Chimneys—buy her sables—a yacht—When a man has no future the less he says about it the better, so Reuben banked the fires of his ambition deep within himself.

Sometimes sitting in the cluttered little room with Judith so near he could touch her, he knew a loneliness greater than any he had felt in the heart of the wilderness. If, for an hour, she would understand, if he could hear her laugh in the old spontaneous way. He looked at her across the table with its lavish display of elegance so sadly out of place in the mean room. Perhaps he could find the right word—

"Judith,"

She met his eyes and smiled absently. She was reminding herself that the easiest way was just to live for one day at a time, to feel nothing, want nothing, remember nothing—that was wisdom.

Self Pity

WINTER set in earnest. Snow. Wind. Blizzards. Sleet. Thaws. Reuben's wet muddy boots drying by the kitchen stove. The air filled with wood smoke, drying leather, stewing food—but at last Spring! Bringing a hint of beauty even to Fordney's Gulch with its mining shafts, its smoke.

The muddy pocket handkerchief of lawn sent out feeble shoots of grass. Judith planted petunias and nasturtiums close to the water window box. The plants made a brave effort to live. Flowers bloomed sparsely, feebly, but before the pitiless summer sun and dry, searing heat withered, grew altogether discouraged—died.

Judith wilted too. Each day, when she had made the little house tidy, she would lie on the uncomfortable Sheraton sofa in the crowded ugly living room—the slope roofed bedroom was too hot

—and dream of the cool, high-ceilinged rooms at Goodloe's Choice. When the sun went down she sat on the doorstep and waited for Reuben. Sometimes the neighbor women came to chat with her. They were kind, friendly, generous. They thought Judith queer, stiff, un sociable.

"Will you go down the Gulch to the picnic with us next week, Mrs. Oliver?" another foreman's wife invited her cordially.

"Why—" Judith started to refuse.

"I'll pack enough lunch for you," Mrs. Kraus offered. "You won't have to bother about that."

"I'll go, of course."

The wooded hollow where the picnic was held was shady. It would have been pleasant had not the smoke and smell of the mine hung over it. The lunch was delicious—homecooked ham, pickles, jelly, cakes and what not. The women talked happily of their homes, their husbands, their children, their future, their past—as happy women will. They asked Judith questions.

"From the South, aren't you?"

"From Maryland."

"My—that's a long way." Most of them had been born within a radius of 100 miles of the mine.

"Was it a pretty place?"

"Pretty?" If only she could have told them of home as it was! But they would have thought she was bragging or lying.

At rare intervals when she stopped pitying herself, Judith thought of Reuben and pitied him too. Poor Reuben—working long hours in this fiendish heat. She remembered the cars he had driven, the yacht he had sailed, the money he had handled, the power, of a sort, he had wielded. Yes, it was hard for Reuben too.

Mysterious Process

SOON he would be coming home tired, dirty. There wouldn't be enough hot water. She had left one kettle filled on the back of the stove. There never was enough hot water. Never enough room, nor air. Never enough of anything except discomfort, dirt, work—endless work.

It was the dishes with streaks of egg gummed to them that made Judith wish she were dead. Perhaps she would die—she hoped she would when the baby was born. She looked forward to going to the hospital with something akin to delight. There would be plenty of hot water, plenty of smooth flat beds. No dirty dishes.

She and Reuben never spoke of the coming child. He longed to speak of it, but the sheer miracle of it tied his tongue. His son! Another Reuben Oliver! It was up to him to make good now—little lad had to be proud of his dad!

—He made happy solitary plans. Resentful, confused, fearful—Judith would sometimes think of the child that would soon be hers with a great, rending pity—not a Goodloe, an Oliver—born to squallor, struggle, to everything that was unlovely and alien. Poor little tad! Horrible to think of—impossible to speak of. When she learned there were to be two children—Well!

Into a breathless, humid July night, Judith's wins—a boy and a girl—were born.

White, shiny, slippery walls. Bright lights making circles upon them. White hurrying figures. Low babble of voices.

Confused, broken, Judith wondered if all women felt as she did. Was it all a lie this rant about maternal love being the greatest thing in the world? She looked at the children: at their wavering, tight-lipped little hands with distaste.

"This young lady is exactly like her daddy," the nurse said.

Judith closed her eyes. She knew she should say something in Reuben's defense. Reuben didn't have a puttyish lump for a nose, a wrinkled chin or squint eyes. Most people thought Reuben handsome. She was too tired to argue about it. If this woman, in white, wanted to say the girl baby looked like Reuben, let her go ahead. She felt disappointed, cheated because she could not love even her own babies, but the first time she heard one of the pink mites sneeze Judith, who had never known fear, almost died of it. "Nurse—she's choking, dying!"

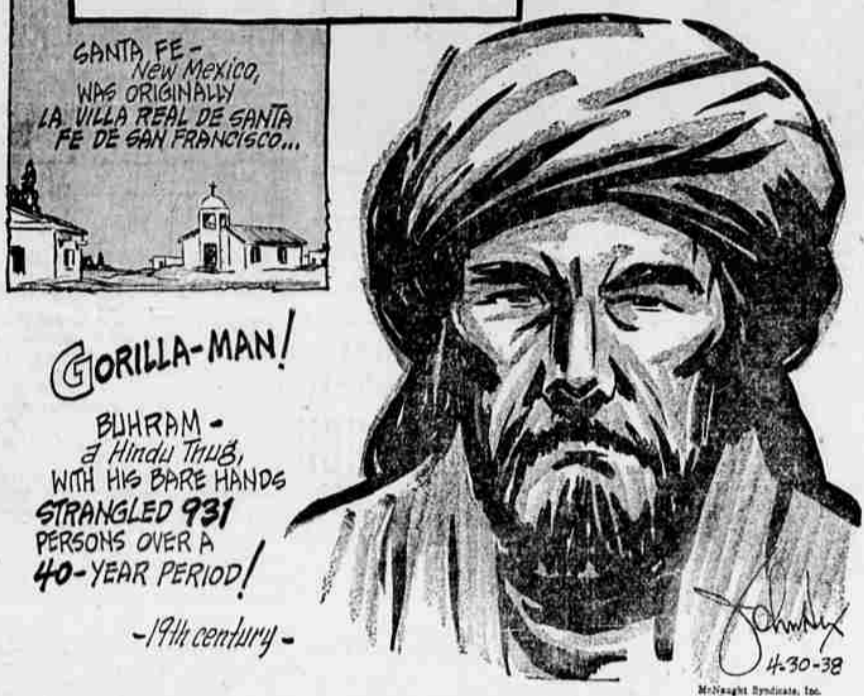
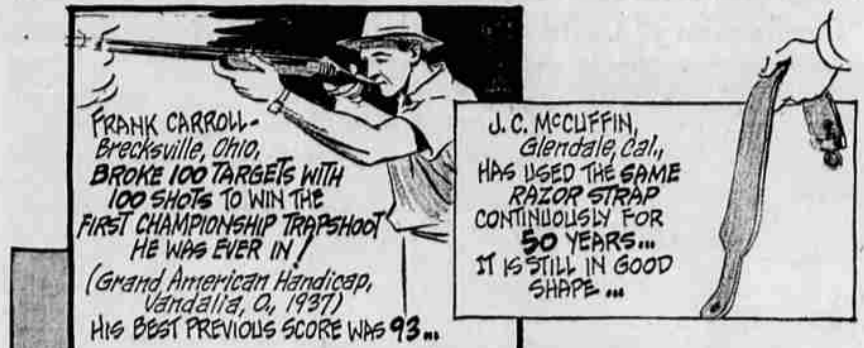
"Talcum powder up her nose," the nurse said easily, but it was a half hour before Judith knew a blessed, fearful peace while deep within her, by a mysterious process, was born such a love for these perfectly amazing, absurdly ugly, gorgeously beautiful bits of humanity that were flesh of her flesh!

They must have the finest and best of everything. If she had loved Goodloe's Choice before, she wanted it now—boxwood, land, house, all that it stood for—with a greed that frightened her. Wanted it for them! How safely a little girl could play inside the hedge! What gorgeous dream ships a little boy could launch on the meadow brook at home! Home! The word had taken on its full meaning.

Monday: Clissy walks in.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



BUHRAM, the Stranger

Most amazing criminal career on record is that of Buhram, a member of the vast religious fraternity of Thugs that existed in India until about a century ago.

Strange as it seems, this one man, in a nefarious career lasting 40 years had alone strangled to death 931 persons! Brought to trial for his crimes by Captain Sleeman of the East India Company, famous Thug-hunter, Buhram was one of the leaders of a strange sect that had been operating since the days of the wild camp-followers and plunderers who followed the Moslem armies of conquest.

The practitioners of Thuggee claimed to be a religious sect devoted to the goddess Kali and were composed mainly of Mohammedans and Hindus. They combined robbery with assassinations, strangling and interfering their victims.

Rules of the Thugs forbade the killing of women, fakirs, musicians, dancers, sweepers, oil-vendors, carpenters, blacksmith, maimed and leprous persons, and Ganges water-carriers. Regardless, women often were strangled, but white men were seldom if ever touched, because of the resulting investigations and punishment.

Strange as it seems, for three centuries the sect hid itself in a mysterious cloak of terror, until about 1812. At this time there were at least 10,000 Thugs plying their trade.

PATTERSON NOMINATED AS AIDE IN COMMERCE

WASHINGTON, April 30.—(AP)—President Roosevelt nominated Richard C. Patterson, Jr. of New York today to be an assistant secretary of commerce.

Patterson is a former vice-president of the National Broadcasting company. He was named to the post vacated by Ernest G. Draper, recently appointed a member of the federal reserve board.

To Hear Hop Program

GRANTS PASS, April 30.—(AP)—Southern Oregon hop growers will hear explanation of the new AAA marketing agreement at the courthouse Tuesday evening at 7:30. C. W. Paulus of Salem, secretary of the hop growers' committee for the three coast states, will be the speaker.

EUGENE, April 29.—(AP)—Eight students elected to membership in Theta Sigma Phi, national journalism society for women at the University of Oregon, included Elizabeth Ann Jones and Jessie Helder, both of Klamath Falls.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—No Guns but Lots of Courage!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—First Aid!

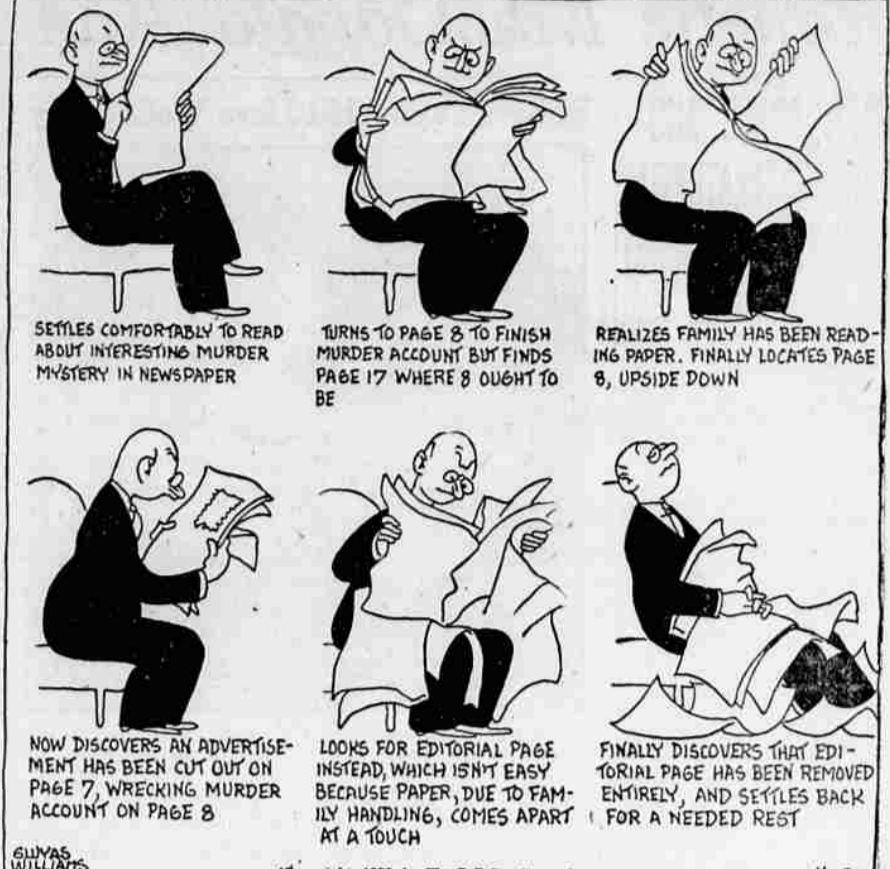


THE NEBBS—Wells, That's Different



THE FAMILY PAPER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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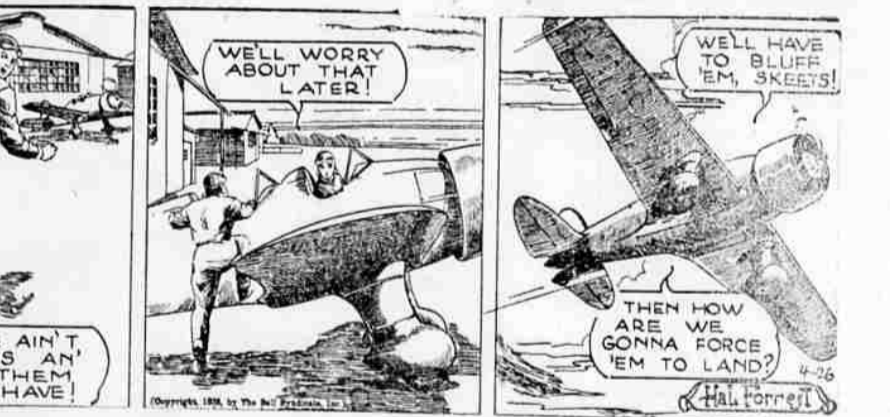
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By C M PAYNE



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By SOL HESS



MARTIN REITERATES CONDEMNATION FOR SECRETARY PERKINS

ASTORIA, April 30.—(AP)—Governor Charles H. Martin, who recently termed "Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins that miserable secretary" of President Roosevelt, stood on the same spot last night and declared in a campaign speech "I'd do it again."

"Stories got back to Washington—the fiery retired army major general wearing incense on the Presidential ticket, said: "My political foes criticized me not only for my criticism of the president in a campaign speech, but I wrote Jim Farley, telling

him the "awful thing" I did"

In a letter signed "Jim," Postmaster-General Farley replied, praising Martin for having done a "splendid job, governor, and I am sure that the citizens of your state realize it."

"I know better than to criticize the president," Martin declared, "because I'd be court-martialed if I did."

The governor, referring to his state-wide campaign against alleged labor terrorists, declared, "If you would compromise with lawlessness, don't re-elect me governor."

GIRL SUICIDES WHEN REFUSED BEACH TRIP

CORVALLIS, April 30.—(AP)—Disappointed because she was not allowed to accompany a group of young people to the beach at Newport, Marie Jacqueline Conway, 13, West Ore., took poison which killed her. Coroner A. L. Keeney said yesterday.