

The Boxwood Barrier

By BLANCHE SMITH FERGUSON

The Story So Far: Judith Goodloe, of an old Maryland family, marries self-made Reuben Oliver for his money—only to discover he is bankrupt. After a poverty-stricken period during which twins are born, Reuben gets work in a lumber camp managed by Gary Brent—the man Judith loves. Reuben is in the woods when Judith arrives, and Gary provides a cabin for her and takes her dancing. Blind with rage at this discovery Reuben removes the babies to his tent. When Judith and Reuben meet the stored-up resentment of months is uncoiled.

Chapter 33

His Own Laws

REUBEN walked to the tent's flap, untied and flung it aside. Stooping to pass through it, he tossed her a crooked smile that reminded her absurdly of Judith's when her feelings were hurt. "You're making another try for Brent, eh? Wish you luck this time!"

The flap fell shut behind him—"Wish you luck this time!" Reuben's words echoed through the tent, echoed around the world. They made a roar like thunder. Judith, waiting for the reverberations to die away, stood staring at the still swaying tent flap like one hypnotized.

Reuben had said that—Reuben! But for his coat slung across one of the beds and his pocket knife lying atop a pile of blankets she could have believed the whole episode a dream.

It wasn't a dream. She and Reuben had done the very thing they so carefully avoided—quarreled! Very thoroughly, too, but at that they hadn't said all they wanted to say. Judith knew it by the tumult that seethed and foamed within her. By her tensed fingers, curved like talons—mute evidence that she wanted to scratch and claw!

It didn't seem possible. What had she been thinking of to allow such an impasse? Gran could have avoided this vulgar situation easily. Judith felt a sudden shame.

Gran was never hectoring like a trapped animal. Gran never had to live in Casper Street or in a tent and scrimp and save and worry and try not to hate.

She had come further than Gran. The going had been hard. It would be harder. Infinitely Judith knew that. What had just happened between her and Reuben was just the lifting of the lid and letting out the first feeble splutterings of a restive volcano.

"I won't stay—I won't degrade myself quarreling, fighting. I'll go back to Casper Street in the morning!"

"Then what?" The tent's sloping white walls shrieked it at her, "Then what—what, what?"

No matter what, she was going away from here in the morning. Going away from Reuben. She hated him, crude, rude—

Gary! If she went away now she wouldn't see Gary, wouldn't go riding!

But of course she'd see Gary. Wherever she went now she'd see Gary. The knowledge sent her head up. But Casper Street would be unbearably hot—

She hadn't dreamed Reuben would dare to speak harshly to her. Hadn't dreamed he had the nerve. He'd always tried so hard to please—flustered, stuttered, been embarrassed at her slightest displeasure. Been servile—almost. What had happened to change him so entirely?

She did not blame herself. Something or somebody—What? Who?

"Cissy!" The answer zigzagged across her reason.

"No!" Judith protested vehemently aloud. "No!" Her self-respect wouldn't countenance that. Cissy had taken one man from her—it would be absurd to have her take two!

Reuben Acts
THE sun was well up before Reuben found a semblance of sanity. The finding had been hard. His rage clung to him like myriads of persistent prickly burrs. All night he had roamed the forest—a jungle beast. Passion, raw, primitive stalked with him. He wanted to strike, to hurt, even as he had been hurt. Reason tried to tell him that he was placing undue importance upon a trifling incident. He would not listen to reason. Judith had done this to him—Judith! And after the way he had slaved and scrimped to bring her here.

His mind veered to Pike. It was all his fault for not preparing the tent, but murdering Pike wouldn't help any now. He must prove to Judith that he was a good man as Brent—By gum that was what he'd have to do! Not next week, next month, next year, but now—this minute! He'd show her! He'd been a fool to take Judith and her codes so seriously. Hereafter he'd make his own laws. Live by them!

Fight for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

The suddenness with which he came to this decision quelled his rage, steadied the dizzying landslide. The time to act was now.

But first he went to the pool for a swim. The cold water stimulated and banished, for the time, his weariness. He went to the community hall for breakfast. He ate a good one. By eight thirty he was rapping on the door of Gary's cabin.

"Abie admitted him. 'Mawning Mist' Oliver. You'll come after you cah?"

"I came to see Mr. Brent. Am I too early?"

"Not at all." Gary, shrugging into a coat came into view. "Come in Oliver. How are you?"

"Fine. The two men shook hands. Reuben took the chair Gary pushed forward, declined a cigarette. "I'm deeply grateful for your courtesy to Mrs. Oliver." It cost him something to say that.

And Gary knowing it did: "I'd like to do more—for Judith."

"Thanks," Reuben said and added without preamble: "I know I'm making an unheard-of request for a woodsman but I'd like to rent that cabin."

"Impossible, but you're welcome to use it until it's wanted."

"I wouldn't consider that," stifferly.

"Why not?"

"I don't relish favors," bluntly, "or being put out over night. I can rent it at your own figure—recklessly."

"So I've been told, but with all of them empty and the season so slack—I'd like to make my family comfortable."

"I'd like to see them comfortable." Gary drummed on the arm of the chair.

"There's an unwritten law about cabins—but I can always put up a friend—"

Hot color crept up under Reuben's tan. "Need I remind you that you're my boss?"

"Can't I be your friend too?"

"It's possible, but as I said before, obligations are unpleasant." Reuben stood up. "Nine times out of ten they lead to complications."

War To The Knife
IT was Gary's turn to flush. He said: "Sit down, man!" He thought: "It's my one chance to—keep Judith here." Suddenly keeping Judith where he could see her every day was the only important thing in his life. He said: "How long do you want the shack?"

"Until I get a better job, or with a slight smile. 'You'll discharge me.'"

Gary longed to do just that—right this minute—but that meant Judith would go away too. He said: "If the season picks up—there'll be the devil to pay if we can't house the buyers when they come."

"You just said that isn't likely."

"It isn't, with building at a standstill."

Their eyes met, held. Each knew it was war to the knife.

Reuben thought: "I used to think I was the better man—I still think so."

Gary thought: "I'll show this bouncer up to Judith. Let him get into debt, then fire him. Serve him right." He said: "You win, Oliver! The cabin is yours."

"Fine! Now about the rent?"

"Fifty dollars a month." It was an unfair price.

It was \$25 more than Reuben could afford to pay with the rent of the Casper Street house still going on. "If you'll give me the key—"

Gary got it. "I'll send Alf over to help you move."

"Please don't. There's only a bag or two. I'll take Judith's Roll-back though. She bought it for \$30."

"Some bargain!" Gary followed his visitor out of doors and watched him get into the dejected car.

Reuben's world was stationary once more. The key in his pocket steadied it. Then last night's quarrel came vividly back and set it rocking again. Suppose Judith refused to move to the cabin? What would he say to her? What would she say to him?

Judith was contemplating the outdoor grill in some bewildered when Reuben arrived. She looked fresh as the morning in white linen, a maize ribbon banding her hair. She heard the clatter of the car and turned expecting to see Gary.

"Good morning," Reuben achieved a casualness he did not feel.

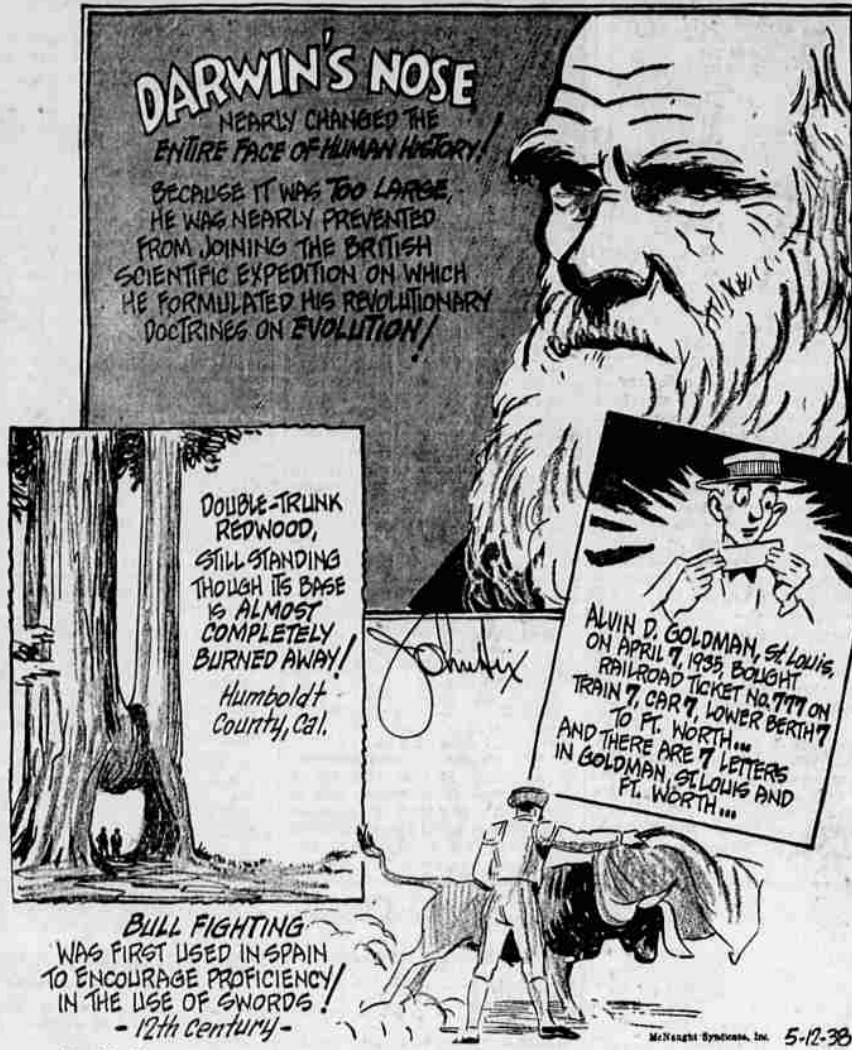
"Good morning," Judith's voice was almost friendly. She reminded herself that after last night she should be indignant, unapproachable, but stirring among the ashes of her anger she could not ever start the ghost of a flame. Just indifferently. She thought: "He can't hurt me. She doesn't matter. I'll see Gary today." She said: "Do you know anything about this grill?"

"We won't need it." He drew the key from his pocket and held it out to her. "See the cabin you so regretted to leave?"

Tomorrow: The landslide continues.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



Darwin's Nose
Noses, more than once, have played important roles in the strange course of human events we call history.

Because his was too long, the famous French author, Cyrano de Bergerac, was forced into fighting more than 500 duels to maintain his honor—and that of his lengthy proboscis.

Because hers was the right length, Cleopatra was made beautiful enough to direct the destinies of whole nations. Had it been shorter, Blaise Pascal once said, the whole face of the earth would have been changed.

And because his was a trifle bulbous, like that of a fine-scarred boxer, the eminent naturalist, Charles Darwin, was almost prevented from giving the world his "revolutionary doctrine of the 'Survival of the Fittest'" which changed the entire face of human history.

Darwin was a lad of 22 when he obtained a chance, in December, 1831, to sail with a British surveying expedition aboard the ship "Beagle" as naturalist. All went well until Captain Fitz-Roy, commander of the ship, got a good look at Darwin's nose.

Captain Fitz-Roy, believing himself vested in the ability to read character from superficial evidence, adjudged Darwin had neither the mentality nor the energy to become a good scientist. Only after much persuasion was the young lad permitted to sail.

This incident, strange as it seems was a turning point in Darwin's life—and an important factor in the development of world history. For the next five years Darwin visited many countries, studying with intense eagerness the slight differences in life form which he noted everywhere.

From these observations Darwin was able to build the framework of his famous theories on evolution which he expressed many years later in the great work, "On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life."

A new outlook on history was born; the law of the survival of the fittest was written into history. On the day Darwin's book was first issued, the entire edition of 1,250 copies was sold out. Never before had such conclusive evidence been presented for the case of evolution.

Tomorrow: Can Cannon Be Heard as Far as Thunder?

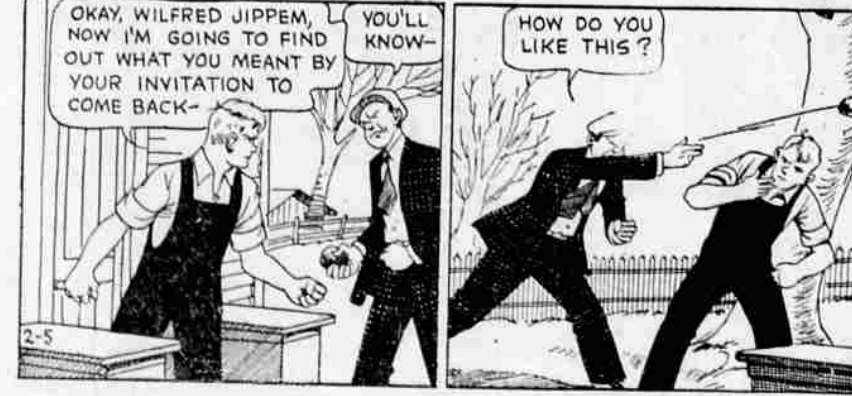
Jenne Appointed Athletic Director
PORTLAND, May 12.—(AP)—The board of education chose Eldon I. Jenne, athletic coach and general science instructor of Washington high school, physical director of Portland schools today, filling the vacancy left by the death of Robert Krohn. Jenne's salary will be \$3,930.

The 38-year-old director was an Olympic games pole vaulter. Among those mentioned for the post had been Howard Hobson, University of Oregon basketball coach, and Ralph Coleman, Oregon State baseball coach.

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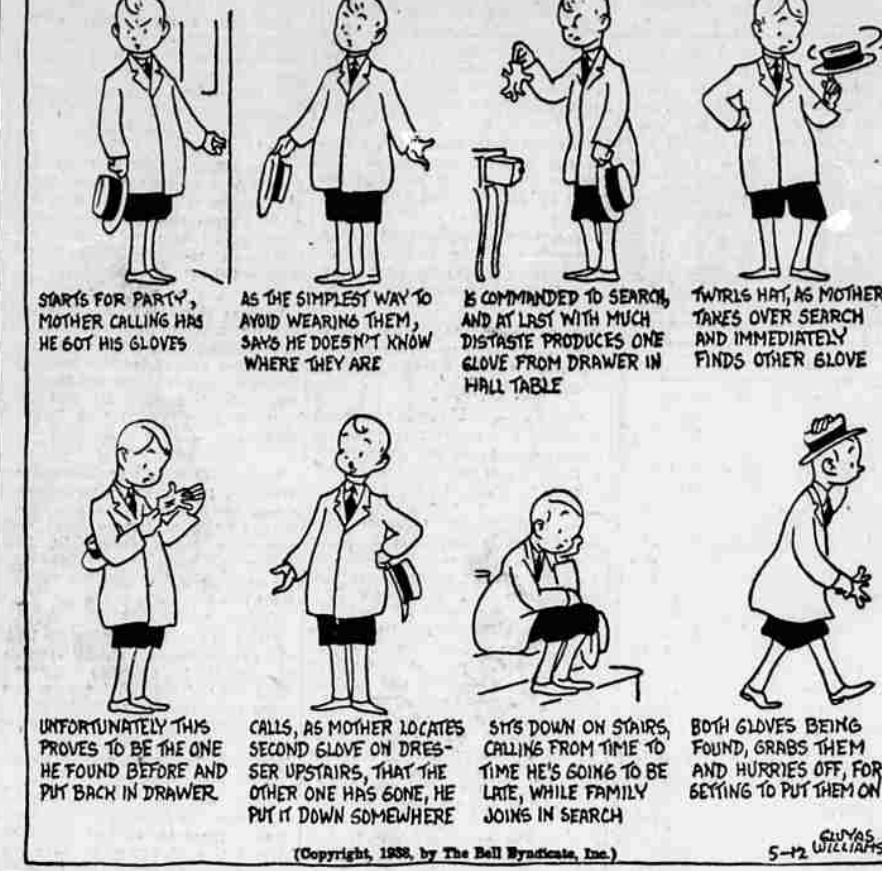
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DEPRESSION BOTTOM REACHED AT LAST IS ASSERTION OF ROPER

WASHINGTON, May 12.—(AP)—Secretary Roper said today in making public a commerce department survey of current business conditions that he believed "the depression had reached the bottom."

The survey showed that the output of factories and mines during April was "practically unchanged from that in March although some contraction in several lines of activity was evident in the final weeks of the month."

"The relative stability in industrial activity in the four months of the current year ending with April is a sharp contrast," the report said, "with the precipitous decline recorded during the last four months of 1937, although industrial production in the elapsed portion of the present year averaged about one-third below that for the corresponding period of 1937."

The impression I got from the report," Roper said, "was that the depression had reached bottom, or at least that it was running at the previous rate. I saw no sign of upturn."

Lebanon P. O. Arrested
PORTLAND, May 12.—(AP)—The U. S. marshal's office said today that William Robins, assistant postmaster at Lebanon was under arrest on a charge of opening and extracting money from the mail. Robins was freed on \$1,500 bail.

Closing time for Too Late Classified Ads is 1:30 p. m.