

THE CLOUDED MOON

By MAX SALTSMARSH

The Characters

Bugs Stern, handsome author, living on the French Riviera.
Archie Lumsden, myself, Hugo's friend.
René Geiss, a singularly unpleasant cartoonist.

Yesterday: The inquiry into the two murders begins.

Chapter Nine Geiss Lies

"YOU say," the examining magistrate said at last, "that you had never met the girl, Eve Monet, until she accosted you in the Carlton Bar?"

I nodded. Hugo and I had agreed that the truth was the thing, and the fairy-tale of the Le Touquet meeting could be only too easily disproved; but the peculiar expression in the eyes of the magistrate became more pronounced.

"Think again, Monsieur Lumsden," he begged me. "How unpleasant is it when one is found to have given false information, which impedes the end of justice?"

"That's exactly what I'm thinking," I told him truthfully. "And that's why I'm telling you that I never saw the girl in my life before."

He leaned still farther forward, till his face was within a couple of feet of mine. The fat commissaire had also hitched his chair towards me. There was a queer, waiting silence in the room.

"Then how is it," asked the judge very softly, "that you informed Monsieur Geiss that you had not only already met Eve Monet at Le Touquet, but that you also had a rendezvous with her last night after the show?" Monsieur Lumsden, I fear that you are not being quite frank with me. And I warn you for your own good that you will do well to speak the truth from now on. Admit that you knew this wretched girl. Admit that you expected to see her last night!"

I controlled my rising temper with difficulty. "Monsieur le Juge," I said, speaking as quietly as I could. "I have told you the truth, and if you don't choose to believe me, you can do the other thing. I admit that I told Monsieur Geiss that I had met the girl before, but that was because I considered his questions about her were a trifle impertinent, and I thought it would serve him right if I kidded him. Devil take it! I added wrathfully. 'One would think you suspected me of killing the girl, when you know very well that it was the man who did it got clear away after shooting down O'Donnell.'"

The little man sat back in his chair. For the first time I was conscious of a certain uneasiness. "Not so fast, my young friend," he said quietly. "You do your best, but no good by shouting. I make no accusation against you, but there are certain facts that you should hear before you speak again. First, it is by no means certain that the same person murdered O'Donnell and Eve Monet. For, to be sure, that killed them were of different calibers. That found in the girl's body was fired from a small automatic, while the American was shot down by a large revolver, probably a Colt. Unfortunately, as yet we have found none of the bullets, and still more unfortunately neither you nor your friend were searched before leaving the casino. If you had been, the absence of weapons on your persons would have been most helpful evidence."

Nothing But The Truth

I STARED at him, completely stupefied. "Look here," I said at last, "let's get this clear. You say the shots were fired from different guns, and therefore you presume they were fired by different people. Is that correct?"

He spread out his hands deprecatingly. "We presume nothing," he protested. "We can search for the truth, and the truth, apparently, Monsieur Lumsden, is what you will not give us."

I was so angry that I could have taken him by the collar and shaken him. "Would it be too much to ask you what else you want from me, apart from the admission that I knew the girl?" I demanded, hearing my own voice ominously quiet.

He nodded gravely. "But yes, there is another question. How, when you deny that you had ever met the unfortunate woman, were you able to inform Monsieur Geiss of her acquaintance with Monsieur Stahl, Monsieur Venner, and Monsieur Rakovsky? I am aware that you told Monsieur le Commissaire here that Monsieur Geiss had given you the information, but Monsieur Geiss assures me that it was not so—it was you who told him."

At that I completely lost my temper. "Monsieur le Juge," I said, "that's a damned lie. I had never heard of these three gentlemen in my life until Monsieur Geiss mentioned their names. I had never met the girl before yesterday morning, and that's the truth and the whole truth. If you don't choose to believe me—if you take Monsieur Geiss's word against mine—that's your funeral, not mine. Now, is there anything more you want from me? Because if not, I'll be going."

He sighed, shrugged and got to his feet. "I must warn you, Monsieur Lumsden—speaking not as an official, but as an older and wiser man—that you are taking a course for which I think you will be sorry. I understand that you are staying with Monsieur Stern? You realize, of course, that for the moment you must not leave Cannes?"

I glared at him. "For my own satisfaction I shouldn't dream of leaving until you've found the murderer," I swung on my heel and marched out through the farther door.

From the fact that neither Geiss or the Baron had reappeared in the waiting-room, I had already guessed that there must be a second exit to the place of inquisition, and now I found myself at the head of a stone stairway that led directly down to the entrance. As I walked down the stairs, I reflected that it was as well as I had not met Geiss again, for if I had I should certainly have broken his neck.

I was still raging as I came out into the square, but a brisk stroll up the empty, shuttered main street and down through a maze of by-ways did a lot to restore my equilibrium, and by the time I came out into the Allées de la Liberté I was in a more normal frame of mind. I sat down at a café table that commanded a view of the entrance to the Hôtel de Ville and prepared to wait for Hugo.

A Nervous Wreck

I WAS just starting on my second glass of beer when he appeared, but I left it to its fate and sprinted after him. He halted as I came up and mopped his forehead.

"Phew!" said he. "I was never built to tell lies outside the covers of a book. Why the devil did we ever attempt to pull Geiss's leg? He's got back at us good and proper, and what with keeping quiet about poor Pat's message and trying to clear you as far as the girl is concerned, I'm all of a dither."

"You've heard the story he's circulating?" I inquired, and he nodded.

"Certainly I've heard it. For the last ten minutes I've been saying nothing but 'No, sir; no, sir; no, sir' to all they said to me." He took my arm and drew me along the quay to where the Hispano lay. "You're surprisingly cool about it," he added resentfully. "Myself, I feel a nervous wreck. By the way, it seems she was a founding adopted at the age of twelve by some American vaudeville artists who took her to the Argentine. Nothing more was heard of the girl until she landed back in France last February, and the rest of the tale we know. You see, you were right and I was wrong. My beautiful dream of a finely-bred young American was all moonshine, and the Yankee accent was superimposed on the French one after all."

He broke off sharply. "And who the devil," he demanded with a change of tone, "is adorning my motor-car?"

I looked. The Hispano stood before us, sleek and shining, in the shadow of the old houses that bordered the quay; and reclining against one fender was an elegant figure in scarlet shorts and green and white checkered shirt.

The creature's eyes were shaded by a visor; his feet were encased in gaudy spadrilles; and as we came up to him I smelled a powerful odor of verberna, radiating apparently from the well-oiled ripples of his hair.

"It's only Jean-François," I informed Hugo. "Disguised as an Amazon parrot. Well, my young friend, what have you been up to?"

The lad smiled coyly. "It is better, this costume, no?" he inquired. "Dressed so, I am not so conspicuous."

I gasped. "In a sense, I suppose you're not," I admitted, "but what the devil are you doing here?"

"I assure Monsieur I have not been idle. I have ranged myself with Grandmamma. She gives me the bed; she is deaf, dumb, and blind about my movements; and, best of all, I have the key of the door!"

He flashed in the recesses of his skimpy nether garment and produced what looked like the key of Windsor Castle.

"I transmit my compliments to your grandmother," I said, "but in the meantime what brings you here?"

He came a step nearer, standing on tiptoe to bring his lips to my ear. "Urgent news!" he breathed. "Fifteen minutes back, Monsieur Geiss came hastening to the garage where his car lies ordered to be filled, and drove away furiously on the route d'Antibes."

"Interesting," I commented. "And what next?"

He hesitated, his sallow-black eyes searching my face with a curiosity that was more than tinged with anxiety. "Next," he said reluctantly, "I must report that it is a matter of common talk among my colleagues of the press that very shortly—within the week—you, monsieur, will be arrested for the murder of Eve Monet!"

(Copyright, 1938, Max Saltmarsh)

Tomorrow: More information about Eve Monet.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



CHARLES GRIFFIN, deputy sheriff, his back to a target, at a signal whirled, drew his pistol, and scored 3 "kill" shots in 1 1/2 seconds!

LOS ANGELES, 1938--

HIRAM CONIBEAR-- famous U. of Washington crew coach (1907-11) WHO INVENTED THE HUSKIES TO WIN THE 1936 OLYMPICS -- LEARNED TO ROW BY READING BOOKS! HE NEVER ROWED IN A COMPETITIVE RACE...

LEE PERSICO-- 2-YEAR-OLD TRICK RODEO RIDER! HE PUTS "BUCK"-- HIS PONY-- THROUGH ALL THE PACES... - Oakland, Calif. -

Hiram Conibear, an athlete who learned his prowess in a book and used a skeleton as a teacher was Hiram Conibear, inventor of the famous "Conibear stroke" which the Washington Huskies used to row to victory in the 1936 Olympics.

Conibear actually went so far as to rig up a skeleton, borrowed from the laboratory, in a rowing seat, to learn the positions the body assumed in rowing. Out of this intense study he developed a short layback stroke which Washington has used successfully since his death in 1917.

Wyatt Eraps of another generation, modern law enforcement officers today are trained to draw and shoot with incredible speed. In a recent competition at Los Angeles, Deputy Sheriff Charles E. Griffin scored three "kill shots" in one and one-fifth seconds.

Truck Driver Has

Gunman Passenger

SALEM, Sept. 9.—(AP)—W. S. Schmiedling, Eugene truck driver, reported to police last night that a gunman forced him to drive from Eugene here at pistol point.

Schmiedling, driver for a Eugene planing mill, halted at a stop sign. He said the stranger climbed in beside him, displayed a pistol and ordered him to "start driving."

Firemen Rescued

NEW YORK, Sept. 9.—(AP)—A police rescue squad wearing gas masks today rescued eight firemen trapped in a burning building as they fought a fire which raged through an entire block in Brooklyn. The fire spread along Rochester avenue between Dean and Rochester streets, a section of warehouses and tenements.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Army Puts on a Show



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—He Will!

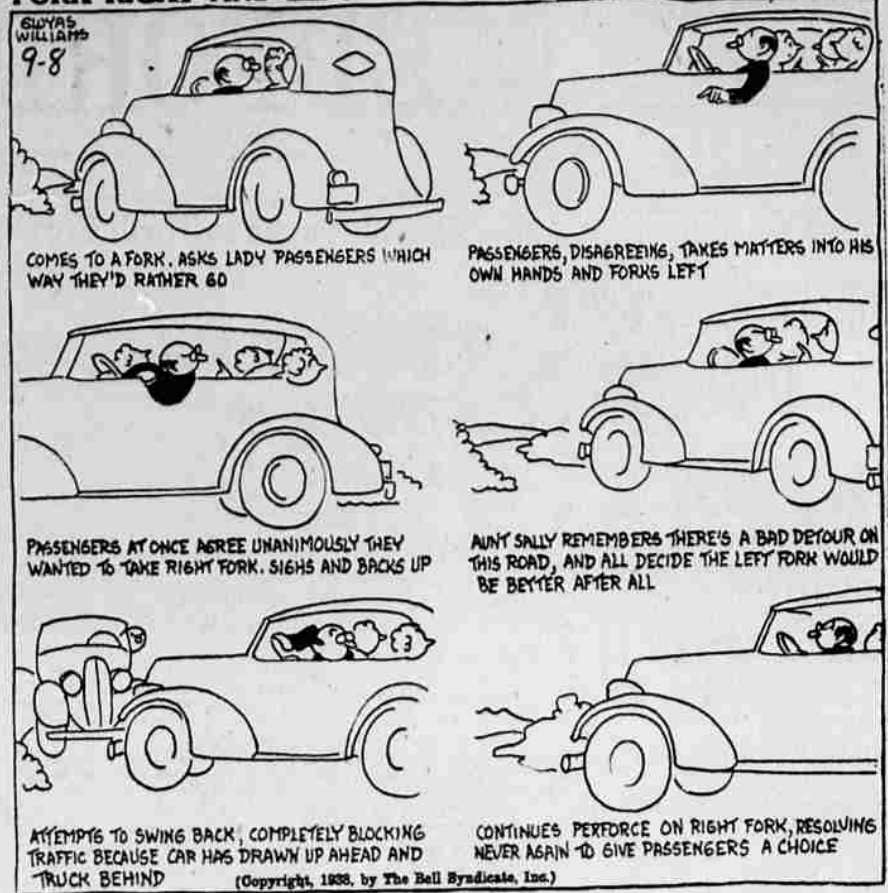


THE NEBBS—Oh, Happy Days!



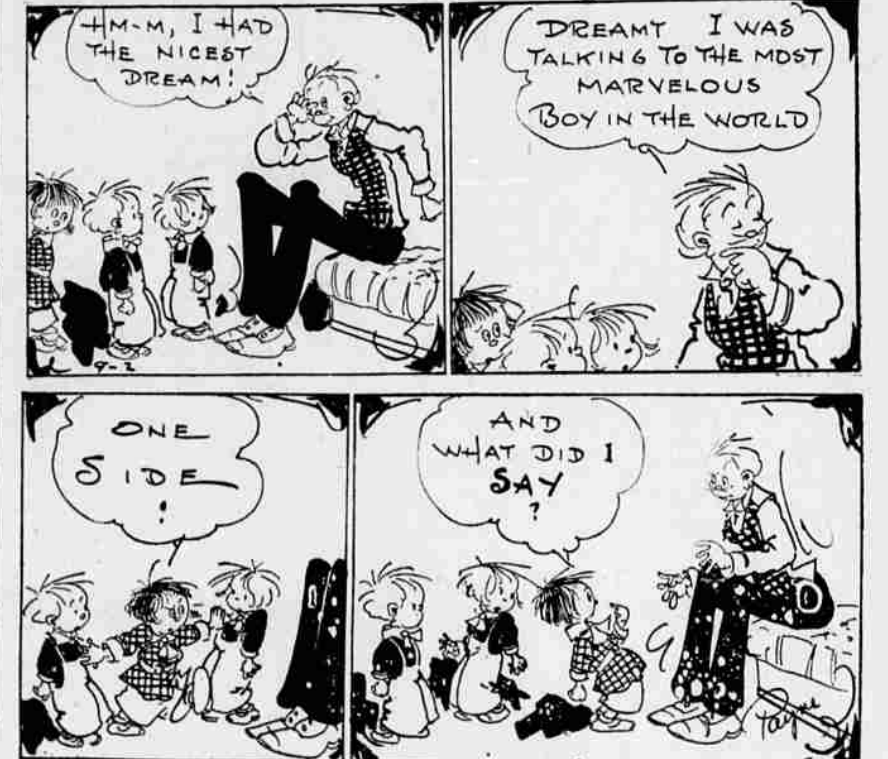
FORK RIGHT AND LEFT

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



MATTER POI

By O. M. PAYNE



Zoo Keepers Shoot

Playful Elephant

NEW YORK, Sept. 9.—(AP)—Hilda, playful elephant, pride of Prospect Park zoo, was shot to death today to end her suffering from the effects of injuries caused when her male companion, Billy, pushed her into a pit in the elephant house.

This morning, Capt. Cheryne Stout, zoo director, had granted the \$3,000 pound beast five days of grace in hope veterinarians could rig up some sort of splint. Later, however, it was decided nothing could be done for her.

GRANTS PASS, Sept. 9.—(AP)—Lola M. Bailey died suddenly at her home here today. Survivors include a son, Floyd, of Eugene.

Covadonga Interred

With Simple Rites

MIAMI, Fla., Sept. 9.—(AP)—With simple rites and few attendants the Count of Covadonga, former heir to the Spanish throne, was interred Thursday in a crypt in Graceland Memorial park cemetery.

Miss Mildred Gaydon, his companion on an automobile ride that ended early Tuesday in a crash which brought fatal injuries, wept as the Rev. F. D. Sullivan of Gesù Catholic church prayed over the body.

Closing time for Zoo-Late to Classy Ad is 1:30 p. m.

ASTORIA, Ore., Sept. 9.—(AP)—Norwegian parents lost a plea before the school board to have their language taught in the public high school. Board authorities said qualified teachers could not be obtained and that the practice would be unfair to the equally large number of Finnish and Swedish residents.