

THE CLOUDBROOD

By MAX SALTSMARSH

The Characters
Hugo Stern, handsome author, living on the French Riviera.
Archibald Lumsden, himself, his friend.
René Geiss, a cartoonist with a distorted mind.

Yesterday: The night I move to the Château the housekeeper is picked up by a big, black car.

Chapter 22 Ear To The Keyhole

I LOOKED at my watch, discovered it wanted only five minutes of ten o'clock, and made my way along the highroad and up the lane to the chateau to find Jean-François already awaiting me.

He clambered down from the wall on which he had been perching and came to meet me. "Monsieur," he said eagerly. "I thank the saints that you are here! So much might have happened to you!"

"Well," I said, as I seated myself in turn on the wall and lit a cigarette, "quite a lot has happened to me since I saw you last, but we'll leave that for the moment. What news have you?"

"First, I made my inquiries as to this Monsieur Dunning, and, monsieur, he is no journalist!"

"I know that already," I retorted rather wearily. "Since I saw you, I've learned a lot about the gentleman; but what else, Jean-François? Surely that isn't all?"

"No," he agreed, a trifle chaffing. "There is more, monsieur, and serious news. He paused, looking at me with a certain slyness. "Why, monsieur," he demanded, "does Monsieur René Geiss hate you?"

I shrugged. "What's his latest exhibition?"

"This," said he. "This morning I visited his villa—to collect, you understand, the cigarette-case that I prudently left there last night. I had the forethought to present myself at the service entrance, and the double forethought to bring with me a third bottle of cognac; and I was therefore well received by the man. The woman, he informed me, had gone to the market. They do not suspect me of your two, for I have told them I am a student on vacation from Paris, with much money to spend but no friends."

"A useful incognito," I commented. "What did the fellow tell you?"

"Monsieur, he told me nothing, for he was harassed beyond words. The judge of instruction had come to call upon M. Geiss and had accepted an invitation to remain for lunch. My acquaintance was in despair, for at once he must commence his culinary preparations; his wife was absent and could not be recalled, and the dining-room was in disorder."

"And what did you do?" I asked curiously.

"I struck him on the chest. 'Me?' I revealed myself as the friend in need! I would, I said, take upon myself to arrange the matter. I armed myself with mop and duster permitted him to lead me to the dining-room. I listened to his footsteps retreating to the kitchen. I crept across the hall to the door of a salon, from whence came voices. I applied my ear to the keyhole and took out my notebook!"

"I whistled in admiration for his cool nerve!"

He produced a notebook and flashed a small pocket-torch upon it. "Here, monsieur, is my transcript," said he with pardonable pride, and began to read rapidly.

A Great Joke
"IT WAS Monsieur le Juge who was speaking. 'René, you are sure that you are speaking the truth? Remember that not only my professional reputation, but also, perhaps, my appointment itself depend on solving this case quickly.'"

"I know that," came the voice of Monsieur Geiss, "but I can assure you, my dear friend, that it is no fault of mine. My information was trustworthy—Lumsden had undoubtedly hidden the gun there, but I fear that your flatulent police chief must have given the alarm too early and allowed him time to conceal it."

"That is all very well, said the judge, 'but how does it assist me? Remember, René, that it is on your advice that I have discontinued inquiries regarding Monsieur Stern and his association with the girl, Lumsden. I cannot afford to make a slip in this case, and you, you must not mislead me!'"

"After that there was a long silence, but at length Monsieur Geiss spoke again. 'My dear one, he said, 'be patient, I beg, and I assure you that soon more will come to light. The young man, Lumsden, is the assassin, we are agreed on that; but he is also a pathological case. Under the strain of suspicion, of remorse, of the ever present memory of his dreadful deed, his nerve will go and one of two things will happen: either he will kill again—violent action is always a relief to tortured nerves—or he will commit suicide.'"

"Well, I'm damned!" I said wrathfully. "Pathological case indeed! What then, Jean-François?"

"Then!" said the boy, and paused dramatically. "Then, monsieur, the judge spoke. 'I do not wish for more murders! A suicide, yes, with perhaps a signed confession—if the

wretched creature was driven to it by his remorse—that would solve all difficulties! But another unsolved murder! That would write fins to my career with a vengeance!'"

"Monsieur Geiss laughed. 'But, said he, 'who spoke of unsolved murders? When he killed first, he planned the crime with a savage cunning, such cunning that, until I set you on the right path, you did not suspect him. But when he kills again, it will be because his nerve is cracking. He will strike out blindly, ferociously, never caring how he implicates himself. Wait another two, three days, and I am not right. I will admit to the crime myself!'"

"That, monsieur," Jean-François continued gravely, "was considered a great joke by the judge, who laughed immoderately, but as sounds indicated that my acquaintance was returning from the kitchen, I fled back to my cleaning and heard no more!"

I reflected. The lad's story had the ring of truth, and I could conceive of no reason why, if he were in Geiss's pay, he should have presented me with these two undoubtedly useful bits of information; and yet the memory of the hidden revolver still lingered.

"Tell me, Jean-François," I said on a sudden impulse, "as you approached the chateau this morning, or as you left it, did you see any one else in the lane—any stranger. I mean?"

"But yes, monsieur!" he answered eagerly. "As I came away, I passed a fellow, long, unkempt, shuffling, dust-colored, and moreover a little mad, for he muttered to himself as he walked and twisted his fingers. And moreover at times he whistled a strange tune."

"Poor Noah More!"

I ALMOST gasped, for his description tallied uncannily with Dunning's picture of the creature who had delivered the last issue of the *Grimoire*. "What was the tune he whistled?" I asked curiously.

He pursed his lips, and suddenly I heard a little lilting melody. Half unconsciously I fitted old half-forgotten words to it, humming them under my breath.

"More, you'll hear no more of poor Noah More, for poor Noah More's no more!"

"You know it, monsieur?" asked Jean-François eagerly.

"I know it all right," I told him. "You've given me just the information I wanted, and forthwith I told him the story of the hidden revolver. 'I've reason to believe,' I concluded, 'that an individual like the one you describe is working for Monsieur Geiss, and I'd be uncommonly glad if, the next time you see him, you hang on to his coat-tails and find out what he's up to.'"

Even in the darkness I could see him flush with rage. "Monsieur, I am your man, as you know—to the death, if need be, and I shall never rest until that rat is shut in the cage he deserves. But can you not tell me a little more? Why does he seek to implicate you in the crime?"

"Because," I answered slowly, "I'm inclined to think that he's dangerously connected with it himself. I can't tell you more at the moment, but there's one thing I want to know. What happens here on the 30th of this month?"

"The 30th?" said he, surprised. "But that, monsieur, is the date of the *bavarderie*! The day which marks the end of the summer season, the day on which all shops sell off their stocks at booths on the main street, the day on which the whole town is en fête and everyone a little mad!"

"I see," I said slowly, "and I'm uncommonly satisfied with what you've done. There's your salary for the next couple of days. Carry on as you're doing; cling to those admirable servants of Monsieur, Geiss, and hear what you can from them; don't forget to keep an eye open for that vagabond, and report to me here tomorrow night."

"At your service, monsieur!" he said enthusiastically and next moment I heard his running footsteps disappear down the lane.

I turned up the little road in the direction of the chateau, but as I neared the gates, a familiar purr made me quicken my steps. The Hispano's engine was running, and I stood back hastily, nearly blinded by the glare of her headlights as she took the bend.

"Oh!" said I, waving an arm as she pulled up. "And what are you up to at this time of night?"

Hugo leaned his arms on the driving wheel. "It's you!" said he, "Thank God for that, though I doubted if they'd be so inarticulate as to polish you off the first night. As for me, I'm doing a bit of night-riding. I made a tour of the cafes on the quay after dinner, and found an acquaintance who supplied me with a useful bit of information. The meaning of 'L'Amour' still eludes me, but the *Carnes des Muettes* is, it appears, a low sort of dive on the main road a couple of kilometers outside of Nice, frequented by fisher-folk and other not so savory patrons. I propose to take a run out there and have a look at it. After all, an author can go anywhere in the search for copy!"

"And," said I, as I dropped into the seat beside him, "he can also take a friend with him."

"Tomorrow: The Club of the Down-and-outs."

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



BASS AND CATFISH ARE CAUGHT IN THE TREETOPS OF ST. THOMAS, NEVADA! THE TOWN IS NOW COVERED BY LAKE MEAD

BIRDS BREATHE MORE EASILY FLYING THAN WHEN AT REST!

THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT WAS STOLEN! (Feb. 21, 1855)

ON THAT NIGHT A POLITICAL GROUP SEIZED ALL RECORDS, BOOKS AND MANAGEMENT FROM THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL MONUMENT ASSOCIATION

FAY VERONICA—Scottish dancer KICKED ABOVE HER HEAD 3000 TIMES IN 80 MINUTES!—London, 1938—

Theft of a Monument
Strange as it seems, the Washington Monument, 550-foot stone needle in Washington, D. C., was once actually stolen—and held for four years!

Forty-four years after George Washington died, the Washington National Monument Association was formed to erect a memorial to the first President of the United States.

Another three years saw the completion of the first design for the monument—a strange combination of Greek, Egyptian and Babylonian architecture. Thirty-one years passed, the monument was up 174 feet. Authorities decided to change the design to its present shape.

Things proceeded irregularly with the work until the night of February 21, 1855, when a band of political "Know-Nothings" broke into the offices of the Monument Association and stole all the records.

For four years the Know-Nothings held the records and tried to continue the work; the general public, however, ignored their plea for help. Finally, in 1859, an act of Congress

not know what the president's future policies and program will be, what stand he will take on various issues.

ADMITS ROBBERY OF DEAD FRIEND

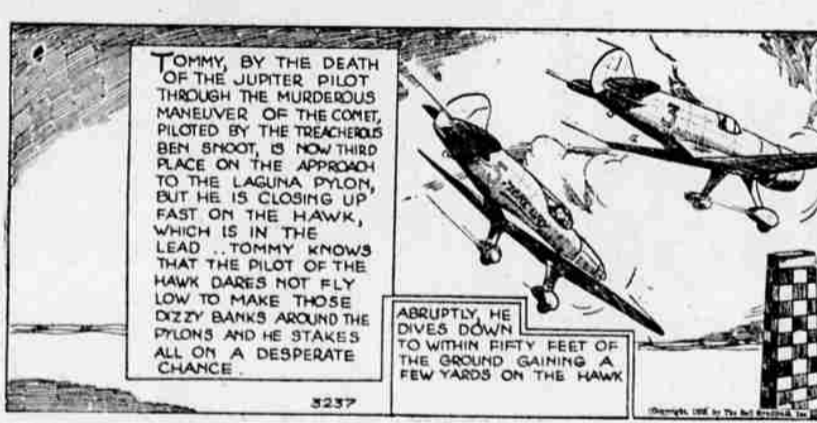
PORTLAND, Sept. 24. — (AP) — Sheriff's Deputies A. E. Love and A. C. Schirmer said today that Elmer Sergeant had confessed to the theft of \$100 from the clothing of his friend, George Pehl, Raymond, Wash., after Pehl drowned in the Sandy River near here last July 15.

The deputies said suspicion attached to Sergeant when he bought an automobile shortly after Pehl's death.

For better milk, raw or pasteurized, call 1289-L, Campbell's Dairy.

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

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Death Reaches for Tommy . . . and Misses!



TOMMY, BY THE DEATH OF THE JUPITER PILOT THROUGH THE MURDEROUS MANUEVER OF THE COMET, PILOTED BY THE TRACHERS BEN SPOOT, IS NOW THIRD PLACE ON THE APPROACH TO THE LAGUNA PYLON, BUT HE IS CLOSING UP FAST ON THE HAWK, WHICH IS IN THE LEAD. TOMMY KNOWS THAT THE PILOT OF THE HAWK DOES NOT FLY LOW TO MAKE THOSE DIZZY BANKS AROUND THE PYLONS AND HE STAKES ALL ON A DESPERATE CHANCE.

ABRUPTLY, HE DIVES DOWN TO WITHIN FIFTY FEET OF THE GROUND, GAINING A FEW YARDS ON THE HAWK.

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Demand!



"I'M NOT ACCUSTOMED TO BEING KEPT WAITING, YOUNG MAN!"

"GEE, I'M SORRY, PROF. AD, BUT BEN WEBSTER'S HERE NOW."

"Y'SEE, HE'S THE BOSS, 'N' I GUESS HE'S THE ONE YOU'D WANT TO TALK TO ANYHOW—HE'LL BE IN IN A SECOND."

"I HAVEN'T MUCH MORE TIME TO SPEND HERE SO I'LL EXPECT YOU, BEN WEBSTER, TO ANSWER MY FEW QUESTIONS IN A HURRY—"

"I WANT COMPLETE DETAILS OF YOUR PRESENT POULTRY METHODS—HERE YOU, GET ME A PAPER AND PENCIL SO I MAY MAKE SOME NOTES!"

"YES, SIR!"

THE NEBBS—Consoling Emma



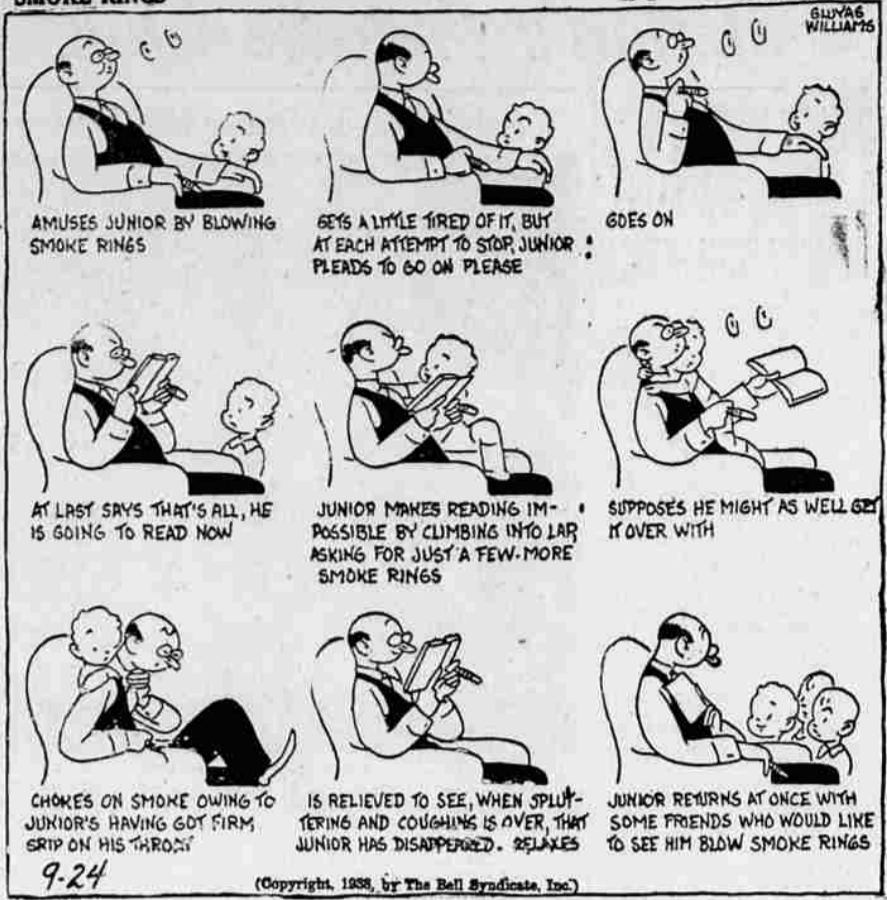
WITH HEAVY HEART AND LIGHT APPETITE STEVE TRIES EMMA'S DELECTABLE COOKING AT THE ALUCOMON INN

"HELLO, MR STEVE, YOU GOT LOVE SICKNESS? I HAD IT, AND HOW! I COULDN'T EAT NOTHIN' EITHER—I HAD HAD LOVE INDIGESTION"

"BUT YOU'LL GET OVER IT 'LESS YOU COMMIT SUICIDE—AND THEN YOU'LL BE OVER IT TOO!"

"HE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL—JUST LIKE YOUR NELLIE—I USED TO LOOK IN THE LOOKIN' GLASS AND WONDER WHY HE COULD LOVE ME. HE GOT MY MONEY BUT YOUR BROTHER ROBBED IT BACK FOR ME—HE IS A FRIEND—HE COULDN'T BE A FRIEND TO HIMSELF LIKE HE IS TO OTHER FOLKS"

SMOKE RINGS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



AMUSES JUNIOR BY BLOWING SMOKE RINGS

GETS A LITTLE TIRED OF IT, BUT AT EACH ATTEMPT TO STOP, JUNIOR PLEADS TO GO ON PLEASE

GOES ON

AT LAST SAYS THAT'S ALL, HE IS GOING TO READ NOW

JUNIOR MAKES READING IMPOSSIBLE BY CLIMBING UPON LAR ASKING FOR JUST A FEW MORE SMOKE RINGS

SUPPOSES HE MIGHT AS WELL GET IT OVER WITH

CHOKES ON SMOKE OWING TO JUNIOR'S HAVING GOT FIRM GRIP ON HIS THROAT

IS RELIEVED TO SEE, WHEN SPLUTTERING AND COUGHING IS OVER, THAT JUNIOR HAS DISAPPEARED. RELAXES

JUNIOR RETURNS AT ONCE WITH SOME FRIENDS WHO WOULD LIKE TO SEE HIM BLOW SMOKE RINGS

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SMATTER POI By O M PAYNE



AN UNCLE SAYS—

WHEN HE DONT NEED THE OLD WELL HE WILL CUT IT UP AN' SELL IT FOR FOOT-HOLES

AW, HE WAS SPOOFING YOU

UH!

UH!

AWK! WHAT DID YOU GIVE HIM

KICK ON THASHIN!

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UH!

UH!

AWK! WHAT DID YOU GIVE HIM

KICK ON THASHIN!

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MOTORIST KNOCKS OFF FRONT PORCH

ODESSA, Wash., Sept. 24.—(AP)—In all her 102 years, Mrs. Wilhelmina Gross never had anything like it happen before.

She sent her daughter, 60-year-old Mrs. Gottlieb Love to the front porch to bring in the morning milk, out the front porch wasn't there.

A motorist, swerving from the street, hit the porch and carried it away. Neighbors heard the night

CALIFORNIA A.F.L. TURNS DOWN FDR

SANTA BARBARA, Calif., Sept. 24.—(AP)—The California State Federation of Labor has turned down today on resolution reaffirming its support of and loyalty to President Roosevelt and his new deal.