

THE CLOUDED MON

By MAX SALT MARSH

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

Yesterday: We find the meeting-place of the Clubs des Sons Clubs, and observe Baron Stahl and the housekeeper leaving with a gang of villainous men.

Chapter 24

Meeting With A Banker

AS I entered the corridor of the Château la Vague, a loose tile in the flooring cracked sharply under my tread, and on the instant a door opposite flashed open, and I saw the housekeeper standing staring out at me.

She was wrapped in a faded kimono. A pair of shell-rimmed spectacles perched inconspicuously on her nose, and she held a book in her hand. No one, to look at her, would have doubted that she had been spending a quiet evening in her room.

"You, Mr. Lumsden?" she said. "Have you been out?"
"It was useless to deny it, for the dust of the roads was thick on the shoes in my hand. 'Yes,' I said meekly. 'I've been calling on my friend, Mr. Stern.'"

"But how did you get in?" she parried sharply. "A key—someone gave you a key?" She pursed her lips tightly, ominously. "Pierre, of course," she said, half to herself, and then suddenly her expression lightened and she smiled. "You must not think I mind!" she said with a sprightly archness that I found much more alarming than the stern disapproval. "Only on other time, if you will tell me during the day, I will give you a key myself."

I thanked her, promising obedience, and retired to my room, but as I undressed I was still uneasy, and the cause of my uneasiness was, I thought, the memory of her smile. There had been something so catlike, so indescribably sinister in the wrinkling of her small green eyes that I still seemed to see them gleaming at me.

As I threw my trousers across a chair, something jingled in my pocket, and I realized with a shock that the key still lay there. Either she had forgotten to ask me for it or had decided that I could do no more harm till morning; but I had to have that key, or a duplicate of it, and I could not get it without going to be easy to hand on to it.

A thought struck me. I opened my door cautiously, and peered into the corridor. All was dark; the door opposite was safely shut and the house was still and sleeping. With infinite caution I dropped to my knees, fumbled for the loose tile, and gently raised it with my nails. There was a little cavity beneath and into this I thrust the key, lowering the tile back into place without so much as a clink. Then, feeling unaccountably pleased with myself, I retired to rest.

I had locked my door and jammed a chair beneath the handle, and it seemed to me that I had barely laid my head on the pillow before a rattling at the key-hole brought me out of bed with a bound to find that it was morning, and that the buxom chambermaid was waiting impatiently to serve my coffee and rolls.

I gulped down my coffee, pulled on a pair of bathing-trunks, and made my way downstairs, a towel round my shoulders. As I crossed the lounge a sudden sound pulled me up in my tracks.
It was the sound of a lift in action. The noise ceased abruptly, and an oblong tapestry at the end of a smaller corridor was pushed aside. An invalid's wheelchair was gently pushed out by the blue-overalled servant who had carried up my bag the night before.

Mr. Venner

IT WAS an old, old man who sat crouched in the chair, a man with a bald, bony head and a fleshless face on which the parchment-like skin was stretched as tightly as an artist's canvas. His heavy eyes looked sightless in their gaunt sockets, but as the servant wheeled him down the passage towards me, he glanced up sharply, with a quick, scrutinizing stare. Then he turned abruptly to the man behind him.

"Where is Pierre?" he demanded in a thin, brittle voice. "He knows that this is the hour for my promenade. How does he expect that you, alone, can take my chair to the beach?"

I stepped forward. "Can I be of any help?" I asked politely.
He looked at me considerably suspiciously. "You are English?" he demanded abruptly, and when I agreed, "Ah!" he said, and nodded to himself. "You are Mr. Lumsden. I heard you had arrived last night. Thank you!" he said suddenly. "If you give Amédée a little assistance, I'll be much obliged to you!"

We were almost at the door when a sudden sound made me turn my head, and I saw, standing beside us, tall, bony, grimly militant the housekeeper. She gave me one glance and primly inclined her head in greeting; then: "Good morning, Mr. Venner," she said abruptly. "You're early today."
"Good morning," he replied sharply. "I am not at all early—I am exactly punctual, and where, may I ask, is Pierre?"
For a moment she hesitated, then she spoke with a seeming reluctance.

tance. "Pierre," she said, "has gone. He left at six o'clock this morning. He was guilty of a breach of discipline, and I was obliged to dismiss him."

The old man glared at her. "You were obliged to dismiss him?" he burst out. "And why, pray, was I not consulted? You take a great deal upon yourself, Henrietta. And who, may I ask, is to help with my chair down to the beach? You never thought of that, I suppose? If this gentleman had not offered his assistance, I should have been in a nice pickle."

"But Mr. Venner," she said hurriedly, "there is no need to trouble Mr. Lumsden. By tomorrow I will have another man and for this morning I will send Marie."
"You will do nothing of the sort!" said he testily. "I'll not be dependent on a woman to get me safely to the beach. And another time, Henrietta, you'll please consult me before discharging one of the staff." He looked up at me with a senile smile. "Carry on, sergeant!" said he.

That brought me to myself with a jerk, for a moment the realization that here under my nose was the second of the unholy triumvirate, Venner the banker himself, had knocked me into a flat spin.

"Ay, ay, sir!" I answered, grinning, and to her: "It's no trouble, I assure you. I shall enjoy it, and slowly and solemnly our little procession passed out across the sun-flooded terrace."

A Most Unpleasant Surprise
AS WE turned into the sloping path that led to the gate, the old gentleman spoke suddenly. "You know, sir," he said, "it is a great pleasure for me to talk to an English person again. I get very tired of these continentals and their chatter, very tired indeed." He checked a sigh. "Unfortunately my health does not permit me to return home, but I am always eager for news. Tell me—a note of unaccountable wistfulness crept into his voice—"how is London looking these days? Is it much changed?"

Filled with a queer, overmastering pity, I racked my brains and told him what I could of the strange new London that he would never see, feeling an unaccountable lump in my throat as I did so.

Once, on the promenade, I tucked him up in his thick llama rug, while Amédée settled himself with a cigarette on a near-by chair; then threw off my towel and took a running header into the water. The beach had been deserted as we came to it, and for a while I disported myself in an empty ocean, revelling in the tingle of the buoyant water, but after a few minutes or so there came a sudden and most unwelcome interruption. A big, shabby touring car came rattling along the macadam and drew up, and half a dozen men in bathing-suits emerged.

I swam an arm or two, or two, then turned on my back and floated lazily; and as I did so, the foremost man took to the water, wading through the shallows in a purposeful way and shouting to each other as they came. It was then that I received a most unpleasant surprise, for their leader was the fellow who had acted as doorkeeper at the Caves des Muettes the night before.

It was a shock, and a nasty one at that, and as I floated, on my back to all appearances sunk in drowsy contemplation, I did a minute's furious thinking. The thing was too pat, too neatly timed, to be accidental.

It had taken us a good fifteen minutes to reach the beach, another five had passed in talk before I took to the water, and perhaps ten more while I swam. Thirty minutes in all, I thought, since we had parted from the housekeeper time enough for her to telephone instructions; time enough for six men to collect a car, and drive along the kilometer of beach road to the bathing-place; and as the thought came to me I remembered with a shiver Geiss's prophecy of my early suicide, and thanked my stars that I was a powerful swimmer, for all six men were in the water now.

I turned over, swam a couple of strokes, and beat water, as the nearest man approached me; but he gave no sign of being aware of my presence, driving on past me with a powerful over-arm stroke. The others seemed disposed to keep in nearer shore. Two of them had got an immense rubber ball and were playing a kind of elephantine water-polo. The other three—and then, as I looked, I metaphorically rubbed my eyes, for where there had been three, there were now only two.

Instinctively I looked down. The water, clear as crystal, showed very glibly and shell on the ocean bed, but there was no sign of the missing man; an even as I looked a sudden outcry made me raise my head, and I saw the man farther out to sea fling up his arms with a sudden, despairing cry and disappear.
I had one glimpse of his distorted, agonized face, and then I struck out towards him, for I had seen men stricken down with cramp before. He came up again, thrashing the water and shouting hoarsely, and next instant I was beside him and had caught him by the hair. It was then that I knew just how many kinds of a fool I had been, for a pair of powerful hands gripped my throat, and at the same instant other hands caught me by the ankles, dragging me down.

Monday: Eavesdropping.

MINOR ACCIDENT PROMPTS SUICIDE

PORTLAND, Ore., Sept. 27.—(AP)—Traffic Officer Michael O'Leary reported Earl A. Hadfield, manager of the Pacific Greyhound Lines and vice-president of the Union Stage Terminal, shot and killed himself early today after a minor traffic accident.

Hadfield lost control of his automobile and it struck a telephone pole. While witnesses attended a woman companion, the officer said, Hadfield returned to the wrecked car, took a rifle from the back seat and shot himself.

In the confusion the unidentified woman, only slightly injured, vanished. Hadfield had recently transferred here from Salem, Ore. His widow survives.

PORTLAND, Sept. 27.—(AP)—Willamette University filed the first entry today for the annual Hill Military academy cross-country run November 23.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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

LINCOLN'S PORTRAIT-- APPEARS ON A FOREIGN POSTAGE STAMP ISSUED BY SAN MARINO

COMEDY OF ERRORS-- CHARLES M. SMITH, Cincinnati Reds second baseman, MADE 88 ERRORS IN 80 GAMES! (1880)

A \$125,000 REWARD-- FOR A PRACTICAL METHOD OF EXTERMINATING RABBITS IS THE STANDING OFFER OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT... RABBITS ARE THAT COUNTRY'S WORST PESTS

A FORCE OF 10,000,000 HORSEPOWER-- MORE THAN THE COMBINED OUTPUT OF THE POWER PLANTS PROPELLING THE ENTIRE BATTLE FLEET OF THE U.S. NAVY-- IS CREATED BY A SINGLE EXPLOSION OF A 16-INCH GUN!

9-27-38

Navy's Big Guns
The almost unbelievable power in the 16-inch guns of our first line battleships, recently computed at the naval proving ground at Dahlgren, Virginia, is difficult for an individual to realize unless translated into familiar terms.

During the period—three or four thousandths of a second—that a rifle bullet travels the length of the barrel, energy in excess of 1000 horsepower is developed.

And, strange as it seems, when one of the 16-inch guns is fired, a horsepower of 10,000,000 is developed—greater than the combined output of the power plants propelling the battle fleets of the United States navy!

Guns are properly heat machines, in terms of horsepower, similar to an automobile engine. But in the case of guns, a far greater amount of energy is concentrated in a small space.

When a 16-inch gun goes off, a projectile weighing roughly one ton travels the length of the bore in about 1-20 second. The average force on the projectile as it moves out of the bore is four or five million pounds. Multiplying the average force by the displacement in the bore (50 to 60 feet) gives the total work, though part of the energy is dissipated.

If the projectile strikes the side armor of an opposing ship, according to the ballistics experts at Dahlgren, the rate of doing work attains almost inconceivably high values, of the order of 100,000,000 horsepower!

Tomorrow: What famous palace is built on the site of a leper colony?

OFFER BIDS FOR OSC REBUILDING

PORTLAND, Sept. 27.—(AP)—Construction and equipment bids well under a \$261,000 estimate for an Oregon State college chemistry building were offered yesterday by two Portland companies.

A low construction bid of \$213,655 was submitted by Dougan-Hammond, Inc., and the Cherveney and Reverman company bid \$82,298 for equipment. The combined bid was \$295,953.

The PWA and the building committee of the state board of higher education opened the bids. The college building was burned recently.

Delay Protested
SPOKANE, Sept. 27.—(AP)—The delay in approval of municipal elevators at Portland, Tacoma and Seattle for wheat loans was protested to the commodity credit corporation by the executive committee of the North Pacific Grain Growers, Inc., yesterday.

Belge Air Service Resumed
LONDON, Sept. 27.—(AP)—The Belgian air line, Sabena, resumed regular service today on the London-Prague line via Brussels, with one plane daily making a round trip. Service was cancelled last Friday.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Who Crashed?

AS THE MERCURY AND COMET SIMULTANEOUSLY BANKED AT OVER THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY M.P.H. TO TAKE THE CORAL PYLON, SHOOT SUDDENLY KICKED BOTTOM RUDDER, SWERVING THE COMET DOWN LIKE A THUNDERBOLT, FOR THE PURPOSE OF FORCING TOMMY TO EITHER CRASH AGAINST THE PYLON OR PILE UP ON THE GROUND.

THE RAT, HE'S TRYING TO...

INSTINCTIVELY YET PROMPTED ALSO BY ANGER, TOMMY JAMS HIS STICK FORWARD STILL IN THE BANK, ONCE MORE DEATH REACHES OUT FOR HIM, BARELY TEN FEET FROM THE GROUND!

LOOK!... A PLANE JUST CRASHED OVER THERE!

GREAT GOSH!... IT EXPLODED!

9-21

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Threat!

COME! COME! YOU'RE NOT ANSWERING ME! WHY NOT?

BECAUSE I HAVEN'T ANYTHING TO TELL YOU, PROF. ADIT!

SO THAT'S IT, IS IT? YOU THINK YOU'RE BIGGER THAN THE GOVERNMENT, EH? YOU THINK THAT YOU ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE WHOLE PEOPLE, EH?

NO, SIR, I DON'T, BUT—

NO "IF'S" AND "S" OR "BUTS" OUT OF YOU! I'M LEAVING RIGHT NOW, BUT I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW AND—

—IF YOU STILL WISH TO PRESERVE SILENCE, BEN WEBSTER, I'LL SEE TO IT THAT YOU'LL PRESERVE IT IN A PLACE WHERE SILENCE IS SILENCE!

THE NEBBS—No Appetite

MR NEBB, YOU DIDN'T EAT A THING—HOW ARE YOU GOING TO STAY ALIVE?

WHO WANTS TO STAY ALIVE?

AND ALL FOR A WOMAN—AND A SECOND-HAND WIDOW AT THAT!

I WISH HE COULD SEE SOMETHING IN ME—HE'S GOT DOUGH—HE LAYS DOWN TIPS THAT ALMOST BREAK YOUR ARM TO LIFT

I WISH NELLIE WOULD WRITE ME A LITTLE LETTER... I'M NOT A STAMP COLLECTOR BUT I'D KEEP THAT STAMP FOREVER...

EARLY SEASON PRACTICE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

SHOUTS UP TO BUD BEMIS THAT IT ISN'T TOO HOT FOR FOOTBALL PRACTICE AND GETS HIS RELUCTANT PROMISE TO SHOW UP IN HALF AN HOUR.

PERSUADES STAN BRADLY HE CAN RAKE THE LEAVES AFTER PRACTICE

GETS PROMISES TO SHOW UP FROM A COUPLE OF MEMBERS OF THE TEAM WHO ARE JUST ROUGH-HOUSING IN THE YARD

MAKES STEVE GREENE QUIT WORKING ON HIS BICYCLE BY PROMISING TO PAY HIM NEXT WEEK THE DIME HE OWES HIM

MAKES EARL WESSON SAY HE'LL COME BY THREATENING TO PUT HIM OFF THE TEAM IF HE DOESN'T

STOPS IN FOR EDDIE SELZER WHO HAS A NEW AIRPLANE MODEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION, AND BEFORE HE KNOWS IT THE AFTERNOON HAS GONE

9-26

3 MATTER OF

By C M PAYNE

LISSEN! WANTA HEAR ME PLAY FLAT FOOT FLOOGIE BACKWARD

OH, H-H, YES!

GOSH!

ME, TOO!

NOW PLAY IT FORWARD

OKAY

9-20

By HAL FORREST

9-21

By EDWIN ALGER

9-22

By SOL HESS

9-24