

The Creeping Man

by Frances Shelley Wees

YESTERDAY: The keys to the poison cabinet were to be left with Duncan, testifies Mrs. Murchison. Duncan throws a bombshell by refusing to give evidence because this case is bound up with something else—the murder of his brother.

Chapter 40 Suicide?

MICHAEL shut the garage door that evening, and turned to go into the house. He heard a thud from behind him, and a shout. Gordon was in his own yard wrestling with his tent pole, which had evidently fallen down.

"Can you give me a hand, Mr. Forrester?" he asked. "I'm in a kind of a mix up."

Michael vaulted lightly over the hedge, and went up to the tent. Gordon crawled inside the collapsed canvas, and pushed up on the pole. Michael leaned over and pulled at the canvas, which seemed to be caught together somewhere down below.

There was quite an opening in the canvas at the top of the pole. Gordon's face was just beneath it.

"It's old Mrs. Devoe," he said in a low tone. "I think the old dame's gone crazy. She came home after the inquest's afternoon and went out for a walk all by herself. She never does no walking, you could tell that to look at her. She went out along the path in the woods, and she acted like she didn't hardly know what she was doing."

"What do you mean?" Michael asked. "Oh, rubbing her hands together, and putting them over her face, and moaning every once in a while, I could hear her clear out in the brush where I was crawling along beside her. And after a while she just flopped down on her knees right there in the woods, and she had her hands over her face. And then she took them off and crossed herself. So I guess she was praying. She stayed there an awful long time. I got a cramp in my knee."

"And then?" "Oh, she just got up and came home again. You know what I think?" Gordon's blue eyes shone fiercely through the aperture. "I think she knows he did it, and it's driving her crazy, 'cause she thinks they'll hang him."

"Gordon! I shall have to soak your head in a mixture of vinegar and goose grease if you... Oh, good evening, Mr. Deane..."

"Good evening. Giving the boy a hand?" "Yes, I think he's got it now, haven't you, Gordon?" "Yep. Get off the canvas so's I can pull it up, will you?"

"Gordon!" his father said sternly. "That is no way to speak to Mr. Forrester."

There was no answer from beneath the canvas. Michael smiled. "It's not so easy to be polite when someone's stepping on your leg," he murmured. "I think that's what I was doing."

"Well, he's a very impolite child anyway. Very impolite. He took off his glasses and polished them. The eyes beneath were small, with pupils the size of pin points. He peered at Michael, near-sightedly."

"This is a horrible state of affairs, Mr. Forrester," he said. "It seems to be. Michael moved away from the canvas with the up-beaving taking place beneath it. Gordon crawled out and started tying down the ropes."

"What do you think of it?" Deane put on his glasses again and put his handkerchief away. Michael kicked at a tent peg. "To tell you the truth, I am completely bewildered."

Trembling Hands
DEANE frowned. "I heard today that you were out here for the express purpose of investigating Dr. Murchison's disappearance," he said sharply. "I cannot understand why I was not informed of that. It is a great surprise, to put it mildly, to discover that one's neighbor and colleague has disappeared—that the police are working on the case—that in all probability he has been murdered, and that one is told nothing."

"There isn't a very much to tell," Michael said apologetically. "I gather that what progress, may I ask, have you made on the case?"

"Almost none," Michael replied sadly. He looked away over the tops of the trees. "It's all very confusing. Their family affairs seem to be in a terrible state. A stranger finds great difficulty in understanding them."

"You think this disappearance of Dr. Murchison has come about through these family differences?" Michael looked straight at him. "What evidence can I think? You heard the evidence this afternoon?"

"Yes," Mr. Deane cleared his throat nervously. "Yes, indeed, I feel sure that you are right. They are not a pleasant family. Dr. Murchison himself was a most objectionable person—most objectionable!" He clenched and unclenched his hands. "Most objectionable," he repeated a few times. "Anyone would have found it irritating to live with him. I wonder

that this contretemps did not arise sooner."

"Have you any definite suggestions to offer, Mr. Deane?" He hesitated the merest second. His hands, Michael noticed, were shaking. What was it, Jameson had said? "When he gets excited, his hands shake."

"I have," he said after a moment. "I could suggest that you question his wife closely—very closely. Ask her, for instance, where she was the night he disappeared."

"She has already said that she went to bed at half past ten."

"She has? Then I should challenge that statement. I happen to know that she was not."

"Where was she, Mr. Deane?" He pursed his lips. "I do not wish to make trouble for her, although if she has murdered her husband she must expect trouble."

"Yes, I will tell you—that night at midnight, I saw her getting into a car that stood over near the side of the men's residence."

"You do not know who was driving the car?" "I do not. It looked like a taxi-cab."

"She was alone?" "I cannot say. I doubt it. She is rarely... alone. There was subtle insult in his tone.

"How was she dressed?" "She had on a long dark coat. That is all I can say."

Gordon emerged from the back of the tent. "I got it all done," he said gruffly. "Have it all done," Deane said sharply. He swung on his heel. "You will not mention that I have given you this information, Mr. Forrester. It was a command."

Michael did not reply. Deane said "Good-night," and walked with short, quick steps into the house.

Missing
AT TEN o'clock that night Devoe came over to the Forrester home in a state of tense excitement.

"My mother is missing," he said to Michael, who answered the door. "We are very worried. Can you help us to find her?" "How long has she been missing?"

"Since just after dinner. Marie and I were drinking our coffee in the living room. Mother said she had a headache... not to be wondered at..." he said bitterly. "And we thought she was in her room. But she is not in her room. She is gone."

"Where do you think she is?" "She has been going for walks in the wood a great deal lately. I think that is where she is—somewhere in the wood. But I cannot think why she should remain away from home at this time of the night. It is... he wiped his brow. The veranda light made his face appear very pale. "It is very worrying. We are having... he paused, then looked full at Michael. "You will come and help me find her? It may be that she is in grave danger. I do not know what to do."

"Mr. Devoe," Michael said coldly. "I was shot at yesterday. Twice. The bullets almost got me. I wouldn't go out there in the wood tonight to search for the Queen of England. I will call the police."

"Not the police!" Michael turned and looked at him. "Is your mother missing or is she not?" "She is."

Michael stepped back into the hall and lifted the receiver. His call completed, he said to Devoe, "Will you come in and wait? As I told you, I will not venture one step outside my own gate until they come."

Without a word Devoe crossed the threshold and sat in the chair Michael indicated. It was only a matter of minutes until the police car slid to a stop at the front door, and six stalwart men in blue stepped out. At the back of the garden, in the shadows, two of their fellows regarded them intently, but did not disclose their whereabouts. It was their job to watch the Forrester house, and Michael went out into the wood with the other men secure in the knowledge that Tuck and Bunny were well guarded.

The men spread out fanwise, searching the wood for the missing woman. Their flashlights flickered through the trees like great glowworms, and for half an hour their whistles answered one another at short intervals. Then there was one long blast on a whistle, and thereafter silence.

For they had found her. Not far up-stream from Gordon's hidden cave, she lay quietly in the shadows, and did not answer when the man who stumbled over her gave a startled exclamation.

The burly officer who knelt beside her touched her with careful hands. He saw the pearl handle of the cold-leaf hand over her heart, but he did not touch it.

"Suicide," he said calmly. Michael turned sharply to the shivering man beside him. In the beam from the flashlight Jared Devoe was pale, and the great drops on his forehead looked like beads.

Continued tomorrow

On the RADIO CHAINS

STATIONS Where to Find Them or the Dial.

Kez, Portland, 1180; KFI, 640
Los Angeles; KGA, 1470, Spokane; KGO, 790, San Francisco; KGW, 620, Portland; KJR, 970, Seattle; KNX, 1050, Los Angeles; KOA, 530, Denver; KOIN, 940, Portland; KOMO, 930, Seattle; KPO, 630, San Francisco; KSL, 1180, Salt Lake.

Thursday
5:00—Rhythm Factory, KPO, KGW, Frank and Archie, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO.
5:30—Strings at Sundown, KGO, KEX, KJR; Army Band, KPO, KGW.
6:00—Major Bowes, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Good News of 1940, KPO, KFI; Sketch, KGO, KEX, KJR.

7:00—Columbia Workshop, KOIN; Music Hall, KPO, KFI.
7:30—Sports Update, KNX, KOIN; Vicki Chase, KGO; News, KSL.
8:00—Fred Waring, KPO, KGW, KFI; Glenn's Orch., KEX; Aloha Land, KGO; Amos and Andy, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

8:30—Symphony Hour, KPO, KGW, KFI; Ask-it-Basket, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Drama, KGO.
9:00—Strange as it Seems, KNX, KSL; KOIN; Sketch, KGO, KJR, KEX.

9:30—Those Who Love, KPO, KFI, KGO; Dance Orch., KGW; Roger's Orch., KSL; Heidi's Orch., KGO.

Opera Series, KNX, KOIN; News, KJR.
10:00—News Reporter, KPO, KGW, KFI; Foster's Orch., KGO, KJR; News, KSL, KOIN, KNX.
10:30—Bavazza's Orch., KPO, KGW, KFI; Nottingham's Orch., KGO, KJR, KEX; Prima's Orch., KSL, KOIN, KNX.

Friday
5:00—Frank and Archie, KJR; Sunset Shadows, KGO; Melody Time, KPO; Don's Forget, KFI.
5:30—Echtings in Brass, KGO, KJR; Musical Vignettes, KFI.
6:00—Plantation Party, KGO, KEX, KJR; Waltz Time, KPO, KFI, KGW; Prof. Quiz, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

6:30—First Nighter, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Jesse's Program, KPO, KFI, KGO; Who's in Town Tonight, K O. 7:00—Drama, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Lombardo's Orch., KPO, KFI, KGW; Boxing Bout, KGO, KJR.

7:30—The Story Behind the Headlines, KGW; Boxing Bout, KGO, KJR, KEX; Big Town, KPO.
8:00—Pleasure Time, KPO, KFI, KGW; Amos and Andy, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Robinson's Buckaroos, KGO, KEX, KJR.

8:15—I Love a Mystery, KPO, KFI, KGW; Lum and Abner, KNX, KOIN, KSL.
9:30—Himber's Orch., KEX; Death Valley Days, KPO, KGW, KFI; Johnnie Presents, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Aloha Land, KGO.

9:00—Tucker's Orch., KGO, KJR, KEX; Smith's Variety Hour, KNX, KOIN; London Letter, KPO; I Want a Job, KGW.
9:30—Quizzical Musicals, KGO, KEX; University Explorer, KPO, KFI; Music by Woodbury, KGW; News, KJR.

10:00—Martin's Orch., KGO, KJR, KEX; News Reporter, KPO, KFI, KGW; Paul Sullivan, KNX, KSL; News, KOIN.
10:30—Heidi's Orch., KPO, KGW, KFI; McDonald's Highlanders, KGO; Deutch's Orch., KSL.

11:00—Nottingham's Orch., KPO, KGW, KFI; Gray's Orch., KSL, KOIN; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KGO.

FOREST SERVICE CHIEF SUCCUMBS
Washington, Dec. 21.—(AP)—F. A. Silcox, 58, chief of the forest service, died Wednesday at his home in near-by Alexandria, Va.

He had been seriously ill of a heart disease for nearly a week. Silcox came to the capital as chief of the forest service about five years ago. He first went with the agency about 30 years ago.

his aides said, but for a while left the government employ to engage in private business. Surviving is his widow, who was with him when he died. Silcox was a native of Charleston, S. C.

Although it leads all other nations in the trapping of fur-bearing animals, the United States imports more rare and expensive furs than any other nation.

UNION ROW HOLDS UP TONGUE POINT WORK

Astoria, Ore., Dec. 21.—(AP)—Officials feared today future expansion of the Tongue Point naval base would be jeopardized by an American Federation of Labor jurisdictional dispute.

Work stopped a week ago, contractor Walter Makela said, on the \$90,000 pier project. Twelve members of the A. F. of L. Pildrivers' union walked out because five members of the Building Laborers' union, also A. F. of L., were not taken off the payroll. The Pildrivers' union claimed jurisdiction over the entire project.

Alma Mater was given as a name, by the Romans, to certain goddesses, signifying mother.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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

EXPLORE -- ORIGINALLY MEANT "TO CRY OUT" (From Latin "EXPLORARE")

WOODRUFF PLACE-- incorporated Indiana town, IS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY A CITY-- INDIANAPOLIS!

SIR EDWARD GERMAN-- English composer, WHILE WRITING HIS WELSH Rhapsody, ATE ONLY WELSH RAREBIT, DRANK ONLY WELSH ALE AND SLEPT ON A COPY OF "WILD WALES!"

THE GHOST ENGINEER! WITH NO ONE AT THE CONTROLS-- THE ST. LOUISAN, crack Pennsylvania R.R. passenger train, RAN 3 MILES AT FULL SPEED AND THEN STOPPED OF ITS OWN ACCORD! -Near Selma, Ohio, August 25, 1938.

TOMORROW: The Flying Cripple!

WRITING ON PRESENTS

12-16



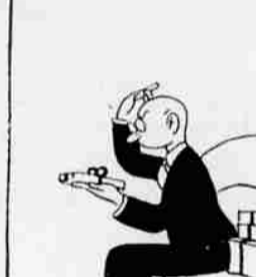
GETS HIS PRESENTS WRAPPED AND TAKES OUT PENCIL TO WRITE ON THEM



RUNS INTO SNAG BECAUSE HE CAN'T TELL WHICH PACKAGE CONTAINS WIFE'S BROOCH AND WHICH JUNIOR'S PUZZLE



HAS TO UNDO ONE TO MAKE SURE, BY WHICH TIME HE HAS MISLAID PENCIL. WRAPS IT UP AGAIN AND SETS THEM ASIDE, REMEMBERING THAT WIFE'S BROOCH IS AT THE LEFT



WHILE LOOKING FOR PENCIL, REALIZES HE HAS NO IDEA WHAT IS IN FLAT PACKAGE. UNWRAPS IT, BUT CAN'T TIE IT UP AGAIN ON ACCOUNT OF TEARING WRAPPINGS



ALSO HAS TO UNWRAP AND WRAP UP AGAIN TWO IDENTICAL PACKAGES CONTAINING BOOKS, TO FIND WHICH IS FOR UNCLE JOE AND WHICH FOR AUNT IRMA



FINDS PENCIL, BUT BY NOW HAS FORGOTTEN WHETHER IT WAS BROOCH OR PUZZLE HE SET DOWN AT THE LEFT. PUTS EVERYTHING BACK ON CLOSET SHELF, WIFE EVENTUALLY FINISHING JOB FOR HIM

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Spinning For a Crash!

CONVINCED THAT LEM CAN SOLO, BUT LACKS CONFIDENCE, TOMMY TOSSES HIS JOYCE STICK OVERBOARD... AND LEM QUICKLY FOLLOWS SUIT!



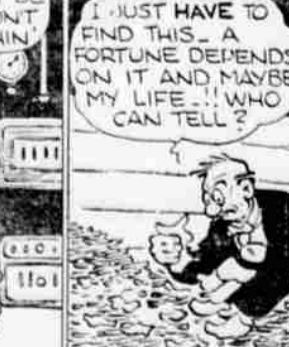
BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—"And That's That!"

CANT, GRANDMA, YOU CAN'T LEASE YOUR LAND! YOU AND ALL THE OTHER FOLKS OF HAPPY VALLEY HAVE JUST--



THE NEBBES—The Needle in the Haystack

THE TAILOR THINKS HE REMOVED A SCRAP OF PAPER FROM RUDY'S SUIT AND THREW IT IN THE WASTE-BASKET



EPIDEMIC OF FLU CLOSES SCHOOLS

Oak Grove, Ore., Dec. 21.—(AP)—Influenza closed the second Clackamas county school yesterday. Principal L. G. Rood discontinued classes at the Oak Grove grade school because of the 154 students were ill. The Concord school closed last week after the enrollment dropped from 186 to 81. Although 100 of Milwaukie union high school's 750 students

were absent, authorities continued classes in hope the Christmas holidays would end the epidemic. Junction City, Dec. 21.—(AP)—The high school and grade school were closed Wednesday on the recommendation of the health officer because of an influenza epidemic. SAN DIEGO PLANE PLANT AWARDED BIG CONTRACT Washington, Dec. 21.—(AP)—The navy awarded a \$20,016,699 contract for airplanes today to the Consolidated Aircraft Corp., San Diego, Cal. There were no details as to the number or type of aircraft involved. Use Mail Tribune want ads.