

The Avenging Parrot

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By Anne Austin, author of "The Black Pigeon," "Rival Whores," etc

CHAPTER XVII

"Orn—blast you!" Lieutenant Strawn growled at his young assistant on the Hogarth case, but the exultant triumph in Bonnie Dundee's blue eyes was not so easily dampened.

"Mrs. Rhodes, did you ever hear Cap'n say those words before—'Bad penny'?" Bonnie asked eagerly.

"No. You could have knocked me down with one of Cap'n's littlest feathers," the landlady answered. "That bird does beat all! I never saw a parrot pick up new words like he does—but he never would repeat anything but what he heard poor old Mrs. Hogarth say."

"You're sure those words have never been a part of his vocabulary before?" Dundee persisted, strangely excited.

"Of course I'm sure!" Mrs. Rhodes snapped. "I've set with Mrs. Hogarth every evening of the five years she's been here, and she'd have bragged to me about Cap'n picking up those words if he'd ever said them before. Of course I wasn't the last one to see her alive this evening. Norma paid her visit after I left, you know, and it may be that Mrs. Hogarth made some remark with 'Bad Penny' in it while she was talking to Norma."

"Well, I'll soon find out," Strawn said abruptly, starting for the door. "By the way, Mrs. Rhodes, when I first came this evening, you said you weren't sure as to whether Daisy Shepherd was in her room or not."

"Well, that Detective Payne and I found she was, when we went up to tell her that Mrs. Hogarth was dead. But she wasn't in it at five minutes after 12, or if she was, she was so sound asleep she didn't hear me knocking and calling to her."

"What's this?" Strawn demanded sharply. "Why haven't you mentioned this before?"

"Reckon you haven't give me much chance, Mrs. Rhodes reminded him grimly. "About two minutes after 12, after I'd gone to bed, the telephone rang. It was a long distance for Daisy, and I went up to her room on the third floor by the back stairs, to call her. She didn't answer and I went down and told long distance she was out. I don't know where she was and I didn't see her come in, because I went back to bed."

"When he had dismissed Mrs. Rhodes, Strawn called in Detective Payne, heard his report that so far no hidden sum of money had been found in any of the rooms, and instructed him to bring in Daisy Shepherd for questioning."

"Back in a minute, Dundee," Strawn called, as he himself was about to leave the room. "I'm going to ask the Paige girl if she knows anything about this 'Bad Penny' business—not that I think it's worth wasting a minute's time on."

Dundee grinned, then again seated himself behind the screen. Mrs. Hogarth's diary in his hands. Before beginning to read it from the first entry he rifled the leaves, to dislodge any memo, letter or card that might have been thrust into the book. In doing so he made a discovery which caused him to purse his lips in a low whistle of surprise. A page from the diary had been torn out—the entry for May 19. May—May—He frowned mightily in an effort to remember. Oh, yes! Cora Barker had said—He turned swiftly to his notes, found Cora Barker's story, located the sentence he was trying to remember: "So I was Mrs. Hogarth's helress until—sometime in May, I believe it was, when she became very fond of Walter

Styles, a new boarder." He was glad now that he had taken such full notes, even to the extent of indicating hesitation between words by dashes. Cora Barker had been disinherited "some time in May." Could the date have been May 19? Dundee very carefully examined the fuzzy edge of the remainder of the torn-out sheet. There was no doubt that the tear was a recent one. Had the sheet been removed that very night? And had the entry been such that it incriminated the one whom it concerned?

Sevier and Cora Barker! After all, why look further for the old woman's murderer, when she herself had believed those two to be in a conspiracy to rob her? But Cora Barker had not returned to the house until 10 minutes after 12. Or so she said. And it was scarcely likely that she would have named the theater manager as a corroborator of her alibi if she had not been sure that he would uphold her story.

But Sevier and Cora Barker had talked together at the theater that evening. Had the final details of the plot been agreed upon then? But if so, how had Cora Barker helped Emil Sevier, without being on the scene of the crime while it was being committed?

"Bad penny," the parrot croaked sleepily. Dundee was startled for a moment, then he grinned. "Thanks for reminding me, Cap'n," he called softly.

"Have you gone so crazy over this case that you're talking to yourself?" Strawn asked, returning at that moment. "Well, boy, you're right—not that I think it amounts to a hill of beans. The Paige girl says she is positive the words 'Bad penny' didn't come up in her conversation with the old lady, and that the parrot had never spoken them before, or Mrs. Hogarth would have told her. But you've gone nuts from the heat if you think that bird—Come in!"

Daisy Shepherd, escorted by Detective Payne, who immediately withdrew, stifled a very genuine-looking yawn as she took the chair beside Mrs. Hogarth's desk. Her big, healthy body was clad in nightgown and kimono.

"Excuse me," she smiled at the chief of detectives. "I went to sleep waiting for you to call for me."

"Sorry to disturb you," Strawn apologized brusquely. "Where were you at 12 o'clock this evening, Miss Shepherd? To save time, I may as well tell you that there was a long distance call for you at two minutes after 12, and that Mrs. Rhodes was not able to find you to answer it."

"A long distance call?" Daisy Shepherd was startled wide awake. "Where was it from? Did Mrs. Rhodes say?"

"No. Were you expecting such a call?"

"I was not! I haven't the least idea who could be calling me long distance." "Where were you at 12 o'clock and a few minutes afterward?" Strawn pressed. "Well," the big young woman laughed ruefully, "I guess this'll teach me a lesson. If you've got to know, Lieutenant Strawn, I was down in the kitchen raiding the ice box. My appetite is something fierce, and I'd been lying in bed since half past 10 reading a book that was simply full of descriptions of swell dinners in Paris. I've been boarding here long enough to make myself pretty much at home, and I knew Mrs. Rhodes wouldn't begrudge me a midnight supper, so I sneaked down the back stairs to the kitchen."

"Pardon me," Miss Shepherd.

Strawn interrupted. He strode to the door, closed it behind him, was gone about five minutes, and returned looking well pleased with himself.

"A right, Miss Shepherd. Please go on. What did you find to eat?"

"You've been down checking the ice box, I guess," Daisy laughed, without rancor. "Well, I helped myself to a few raspberries out of a big bowl on the top shelf, took a slice of boiled ham from an oiled paper package of it on the bottom shelf, and made a sandwich by splitting a roll I got out of the bread box. Oh, yes, I took a banana, too. There was a dozen in the top of the box against the ice."

"And after you'd enjoyed your stolen fruits?" Strawn suggested.

"Oh, I only ate the raspberries down there. I brought the sandwich and the banana to my room. The banana skin is in my wastebasket now. I came up the back stairs, straight to my room, and I didn't see or hear anything either trip—up or down," she added.

"I see . . . Miss Shepherd, you were at one time named in Mrs. Hogarth's will were you not?"

"Sure! I guess I held the job longer than anyone else before or since," Daisy chuckled. "I was her helress for six months—until the day after Christmas this year. Cora Barker got the job, but I was glad to lose it."

Strawn frowned. "Suppose you explain, Miss Shepherd. Did you quarrel with Mrs. Hogarth?"

"If you knew me better, you'd know I never quarrel. I'm one of those good-natured fat people you read about, and seldom meet up with." Daisy grinned. "I mean just what I said: It was a hard job being Mrs. Hogarth's favorite. She wanted you to devote most of your time to her, and she expected all sorts of presents. I practically clothed her while I was on the job. I work at Marcus-Crane's in the ladies-to-wear, you know. Been there for nearly two years. I liked the old lady a lot, and we kept on being good friends even after I told her she ought to pick someone else to leave her money to."

"You told her that?" Strawn was frankly amazed. "Then I gather that you don't care for money—"

"Sure, I like money as well as the next one," Daisy retorted. "But I make plenty for myself, without having to lick anybody's boots. I also had a pretty strong hunch that Mrs. Hogarth didn't have any money to leave to anybody—not that I liked her any the less for having her fun with us."

She looked interestedly about the disordered room, with its gutted trunk, closet and desk.

"You know, Lieutenant Strawn, I'd be willing to bet whoever pulled this job got stung."

(To Be Continued)

Sick Sailor Gets Radio Treatment

PORTLAND, Ore., Nov. 13 (A P)—Medical advice for the treatment of a sailor on the steamship Makiki, 700 miles out from Seattle, bound for Honolulu, was furnished early today by J. T. Ross, police surgeon, over the radio. The Merchants Exchange received a radio appeal from the master of the vessel and the police surgeon was summoned to the broadcasting station.

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- QUESTION MARK FLIGHT. Made by the U. S. Army in January 1929. First of the great endurance achievements, breaking all previous distance and duration records.
- WOMEN'S ENDURANCE RECORD. Made by Hubert Tross in January 1929 and broken again by the same flyer in February . . . with Richfield Gasoline used in both flights.
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- ANGELNO ENDURANCE FLIGHT. Made by Mendel and Reichen in July 1929. Shattered all previous records for sustained flight by more than three days.
- 1929 NATIONAL AIR DERBY. The Oakland to Cleveland Race, and 9 closed course events in the Cleveland Air Races . . . were won with Richfield Gasoline.



RICHFIELD

ERRORGRAMS



These are at least four mistakes in the above picture. They may pertain to grammar, history, etiquette, drawing or whatnot. See if you can find them. Then look at the scrambled word below—and unscramble it, by switching the letters around. Grade yourself 20 for each of the mistakes you find, and 25 for the word if you unscramble it. Find corrected list on page 7.

Freckles and His Friends



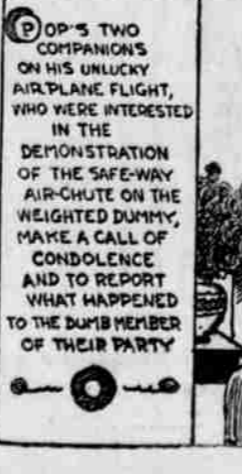
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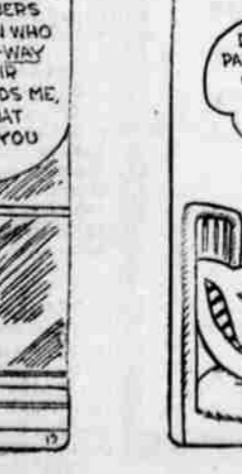
By Blosser



Mom'n Pop



The Last Straw



By Gowan

