

The UNKNOWN BLOND

By Laura Lou BROOKMAN

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BEGIN HERE TODAY
DAVID BANNISTER undertakes to find out who killed TRACY KING, orchestra leader. Bannister is an author and former newspaper man. He works on the murder case with GAINES, star reporter on the Post.
Among those suspected are JULIET FRANGE, blond, pretty and known to have visited King shortly before his death; HERMAN SCURLOCK who wrote King a threatening letter; and JOE PARROT, down-and-out vaudeville actor. It is also known that MELVINA HOLLIESTER, middle-aged spinster, had quarreled with King recently.
AL DRUGAN, friend of King's, is found dead in a wrecked automobile.
Bannister persuades the police chief to let Juliet come to his aunt's home, ostensibly as a guest, on the theory that if the girl believes her own free they can learn more about her.
Melvina Holliester is found strangled in the apartment where she lived with her brother, Matthew. Her death leaves him sole heir to \$150,000.
Juliet's sister and brother-in-law come to the police and arranged with police for Juliet to return home but she refuses to go.
Bannister meets Matthew Holliester on the street.

CHAPTER XLV

BANNISTER matched his step to Matthew Holliester's. The older man said, "Bit chilly this morning, isn't it?" He looked up at the sky. "I expect we'll get a good snow before long."

He had snored the afternoon Melvina Holliester had been found dead. Bannister glanced at his companion curiously. "Yea," he said, "I expect we'll have some snow. Are you still out at the Shelby Arms, Mr. Holliester?"

"Oh, yes, I'm still there. Rent's paid so I might as well stay. But I'm figuring on getting away—at least for a spell." He put his hand into the pocket of his coat and drew out several brightly colored booklets. "Look at these!" he said eagerly.

They were folders setting forth the attraction of steamship cruises to the West Indies, Central America and Bermuda.

"Have you ever been to Havana?" Holliester asked.

"Yes, I've been there."

"Pretty lively city, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's lively. If that's what you're looking for. There's always a big crowd of tourists about this time of year, or a little later. Havana's a beautiful place."

Holliester nodded approvingly. "I figured I'd like it. There's one of these trips that takes in a lot of different islands but I don't know if I'd care so much for that. Havana's the place I want to see. They're got palm trees down there, haven't they? And it's warm there now. It says so here in this book—"

He held out the folder. "I'd like to go there," he went on. "And just loaf around for a while. You see, Mr. Bannister, I've never made a trip on a boat. An ocean trip, I mean. Always wanted to but—well, one thing and another prevented it. I made up my mind the other day that I could go just as well as not, so I went down and got these little books." He smiled boyishly. "I've been carrying them around with me ever since!"

"Are you planning on going soon?" Bannister asked.

"I'd like to. By the end of the week. Course I'll have to make up my mind first which trip I'm going to take. But I've about settled on Havana. The fellow who gave me the books told me what it would cost. I guess there's a lot of things that take money, though, that they don't figure in. And then I may want to stay quite a while if I like it. Do you suppose I could make the trip for—say, \$1,000?"

BANNISTER was thinking rapidly. "I should think you could do it in royal style for that."

"Well, I want to do it up right," Holliester assured him. "They say there's a swimming pool on this boat and they dance every night—"

He went on, recounting the luxuries outlined by the steamship folder, and asking more questions. Bannister let him when they reached the street corner and went on alone.

So Matthew Holliester was planning a trip to Havana. Matthew, newly outfitted by an expensive tailor, talked easily of spending money by the thousand, of going where there was gaiety and "liveliness." Yet it was less than a week since his sister had been murdered.

Bannister remembered Mrs. Harbrough's words, "Matthew'll have quite a fortune now. Probably around \$150,000. I wonder what he'll do with all that money."

Ten days before Matthew Holliester, wearing a threadbare tweed topcoat and a shapless gray hat, had seemed grateful because Bannister had bought him a 10-cent glass of beer. He had spoken of the beer as a rare indulgence because "Melvina doesn't like it." And he had intimated that his sister was worried, that he believed she had some knowledge of Tracy King's death which he was keeping from the police. Later Holliester had said as much as denied that he had said that.

He might, of course, want to take a steamship voyage to forget his grief. Plenty of people did that. But Holliester had said not a word about his sister, not a word to suggest the trip was to ease heartache. On the contrary, he was looking for gaiety, going because he had "never made an ocean trip."

Bannister pursed his lips. "There's something there!" he assured himself. And instantly he set a task for himself. It was to learn more about Matthew Holliester.

He went first to Jim Paxton. "You're an old-timer here, Jim," he said. "At least your family's been here a long time. What do you know about Matthew Holliester?"

But Paxton could tell him nothing he had not known before. The Holliester, he knew, was an aristocratic family. Once they had been

rather prominent socially, Paxton thought, but not since he could remember. He knew Matthew by sight, though he had never spoken to him.

"What's up?" he demanded. "Something new on the murder?"

"No," Bannister told him. "Just an idea I've got into my head. That's all. If it turns into anything I'll let you know."

He went next to Bob Whitaker, the oldest man on the Post's editorial staff. Bob held the title of state editor and his work was dealing with the out-of-town news correspondents. He had worked on the Post for 30 years and was a walking volume of local history.

"What'd you want to know about the Holliester?" he demanded. "Anything you can tell me?"

Bob Whitaker's account was similar to Mrs. Harbrough's. Old Ezra Holliester, Matthew's father, had built up what was considered a fortune in his day. Mrs. Holliester died before her husband and the money was left to Melvina and Matthew with the stipulation that it was not to be divided and, so long as Melvina lived, she was to say how the money should be used.

Beyond that, Bob Whitaker had little to offer except one comment. "I wasn't as surprised as everyone else seems to have been when they found her dead," he said. "Melvina Holliester was a Tartar."

"What do you mean?"

"She had the meanest disposition and the sharpest tongue of any woman I ever met. I don't see how her brother stood it all those years, letting her boss him around the way she did."

"He seems meek enough."

"Oh, sure! How do you think he'd ever have lived with Melvina if he wasn't? If he'd only admit it I'll bet he's glad to be able to call his soul his own!"

THE interview had not been altogether satisfactory. It was near lunch time and Bannister left the newspaper office, walking toward his favorite restaurant. As he neared the street intersection a large blue sedan halted at the other side of the street. A man stepped out of the car and Bannister caught a glimpse of the girl who was driving. She wore a brown hat and a dark red suit. Almost immediately the car was on its way again.

Bannister called, "Oh, Coleman!" and hurried forward.

Parker Coleman said, "Hello! Haven't seen you in a long while."

"You're just the man I want to talk to," Bannister told him. "How about coming to lunch with me?"

"Glad to."

They strolled on to the restaurant, found a table and ordered. Coleman lit a cigarette and asked negligently, "What's on your mind?"

Bannister's eyes were eager. "I don't know," he said. "I'm not quite sure. Do you remember the night we found Al Drugan's car wrecked that we had been talking about Melvina Holliester?"

"No," Coleman said. "I don't believe I do."

"Don't you remember that while we were at dinner I told you I'd seen her brother, Matthew, and he told me he was worried about her, afraid she knew something she wasn't telling the police? I asked you to go and 'have a talk with her.'"

"By George, I do remember now! Hadn't thought of it again until this minute. She's the old girl who was strangled—"

"She's the one," Bannister agreed. "So you didn't get around to talk to her?"

"I'm damned sorry about it, Bannister. I remember now that I promised. I suppose it was because of all the excitement over Drugan that I forgot. I've been rather busy lately, too."

Bannister nodded. "I can understand," he said, "but I wish you'd seen her just the same. I was talking to her brother a while ago."

"Broken up about what happened, I suppose?"

"No. That's the queer part. He isn't. In fact he's looking better than I ever saw him before."

"You don't say?"

Coleman raised his eyes in surprise. "And it was then that the idea came to Bannister."

(To Be Continued)

Under the new Michigan motor law a person who fails to pay an automobile a c c d e n t judgment against him may never drive a car again in Michigan.

In Sweden every car owner must have his name and address on a plate attached to the dash board of his automobile.

The first of January, 1929, saw 357,504 telephones in use in Los Angeles.

Flapper Fanny Says

Men who cut corners have an eye for curves.

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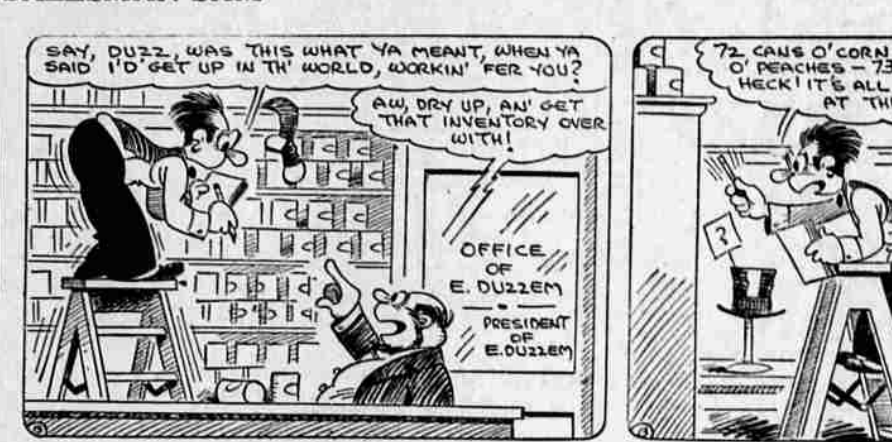
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OUT OUR WAY



SALESMAN SAM



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



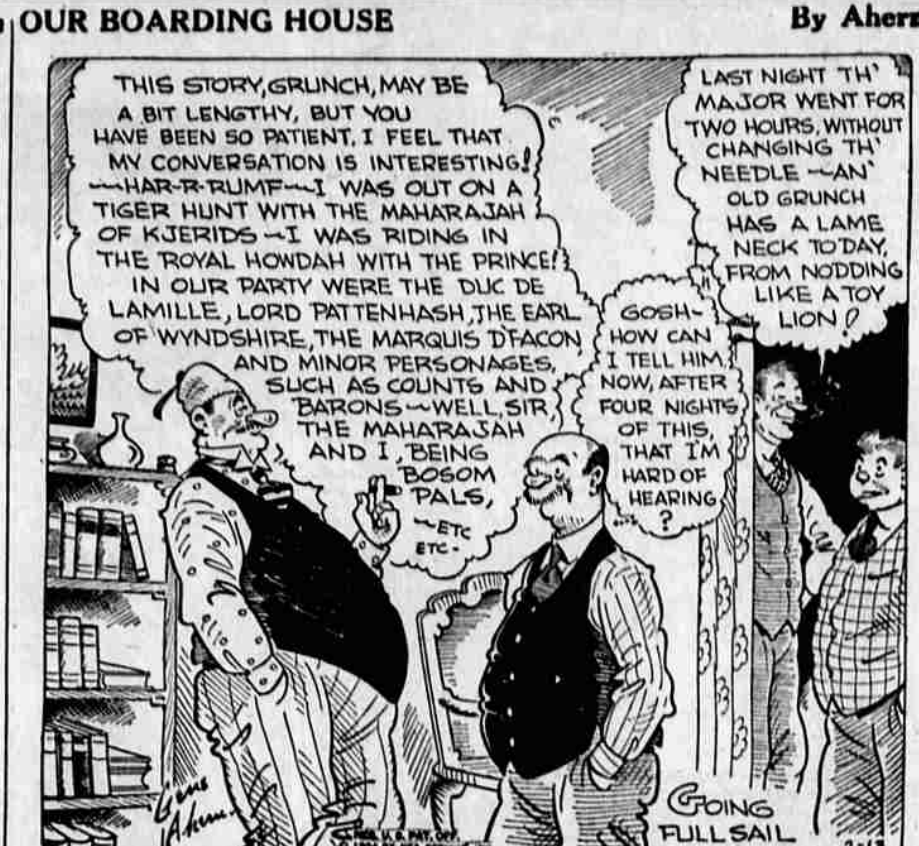
WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



By Small



By Martin



By Crane



By Blosser



By Cowan

