

The ROMANTIC RUNAWAY

by KATHARINE HAVILAND-TAYLOR

BEGIN HERE TODAY

FABRIZIO, a handsome youth, became a fugitive when he fled from Key West to Havana with Billings and LOTTIE, two girls. Fabrizio has been accused of a murder he did not commit. He is in love with ESTELLE FIELD, daughter of rich JIM FIELD, but feels he has exiled himself from her forever.

In Havana he becomes celebrated as a hero and he and Billings open a gymnasium. BILLINGS, a titled Englishman, is Fabrizio's father. He is searching for his son, employing BILLINGS, New York detective. Three years pass and then Fabrizio and Estelle meet again. They admit their love for each other. ESTELLE THREATENS to sue, warning the Fields could prove Fabrizio was not the murderer. He has maintained silence, fearing scandal.

CHAPTER XXX

J. SMITHSON BILLINGS was in Havana. It was the first week of March and so hot that Cuban senoras and their daughters were beginning to long for the time when they could don the light raincoat that the mad tourists wore throughout the winter.

Billings was going to pay another visit to the woman who, before her marriage, had been Conception Villaverde y Blanco. He knew that unless they traveled the same road many times you could not be sure that every stone had been turned over. Then he was going to Key West again to hunt up the filthy old crone called Angela. And this time he would solve it that she did not escape him. He felt a curious and comfortable sense of having at last set out on the right course.

He whistled as he dressed on that early March morning and for some moments he studied the pattern of colors on the tiled floor. The pattern was made by sunlight sifting through the colored glass of half of an inward-opening window.

As a child, visiting his aunt, BILLINGS remembered passing into a room to watch the changing patterns which a twist or a shake of the object produced. The colors on the tiled floor made him think of that kaleidoscope.

He adjusted his tie carefully, studied his face in the mirror and then assumed the expression which he thought most becoming—a rather fierce expression made more impressive because his head was thrown back and his shoulders held high. Billings liked to look like a man who was not to be trifled with.

He studied himself for some minutes, hands in his pockets and then out. He frowned, assumed an expression less severe, nodded and then smiled. There are few of us who do not occasionally indulge in such manifestations of human frailty.

Then he went down stairs to his breakfast, stopping on the way to buy a newspaper that was printed in English.

READING while he waited for the food, he saw on the last page of the newspaper that there was to be a prize fight at the end of the week between the Juanito of whom he had often heard and one Al Gates, hailing from London. Billings decided he would take in the match, then turned to another page.

The fight was to be at La Miraflores, a club run by millionaires. It would probably be a rather restricted affair but Billings was sure he could gain admittance.

An American strolled into the dining room, proclaiming his nationality by his shoes and clothing and that haste that cannot be forgotten even in leisure. He saw Billings and paused beside his table.

"American?" the newcomer questioned, with an eye on Billings' tightly encased shoulders and Grazziati-talored clothes.

"Yes. Fine morning."

"Yes, but it's going to be a scorcher again if I know anything about it."

"Likely. Sit down, won't you?"

"Thanks. My wife takes her breakfast in bed and I don't like eating alone, even if I read the paper. At home she gets up but she says she's on a vacation now. I guess she deserves it. You know how hard it is to get help. We haven't had a cook for more than 10 days in the last 10 years!"

"Too bad," Billings agreed solemnly. "It's the same with me and my wife."

The stranger ordered ham, eggs, a pot of hot coffee if you have any," and hot rolls. Then he sat back in his chair. "What's the news?" he questioned, his eyes on Billings' newspaper, now folded beside the steamed carafe.

Billings told Mr. Gartside—whose card he had taken to slip into a case as he handed his own card across the table—that there was to be a fight.

MR. GARTSIDE had known that and said he was going if he could manage it.

"Ever seen this Juanito?" he asked. Billings shook his head.

"Well, he's the queerest looking fellow for a Cuban you ever laid your eyes on. Blond as they make 'em. Blue eyes, too."

"That so?" Billings asked. His face was losing a little of its morning thickness and he leaned across the table.

"Does he have any relatives here? I mean this Juanito?"

"Well, they say an old woman back in the country claims him as her son but I've heard that's just a story. Made up for some reason."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, funny place, Havana."

"Yes."

"By the way, what's your line, Mr. Billings? I'm in plumbing. Newark's my home. I suppose you've been in Newark?"

"Many times. Fine, progressive city."

"A city of beautiful homes," said Mr. Gartside heavily.

They talked in a desultory way after that and finally, with promises to meet again soon, separated. Billings went outside where he ordered a fotingo to take him to Juanito's gymnasium of which Mr. Gartside had told him. He was rather oppressed on the trip; he hated exercise.

The visit gave him no reward. Juanito was not to be seen and a harsh voiced product of the Bowery ordered Billings to "Speed up! Speed up!" After that the same voice ordered him into a chamber where he was mercilessly pummeled, subjected to ice water from a large nozzle hose and otherwise tortured. Billings returned to Havana utterly limp and angry over his failure.

"My God!" he thought, lurching from side to side in the taxi cab and mopping his brow. "My God, that was fierce!"

HE ate a light luncheon and, although still very uncomfortable, pursued his quest. The boy at the counter spoke English. "By the way," Billings said after some conversation about the weather, "what's the name of the mother of this Juanito, the big fighter? I'm a newspaper man and I thought I might get a story out of her. You know people like to hear of a mother's influence, which—take it from me, kid—may be a beautiful thing!"

The boy at the counter, who had picked up his English from roving Americans, agreed. "Sure!" He did not, he said, shaking his head, know the name of Juanito's mother. But, he added quickly, he would be able to find out.

The boy came back, announcing that the name of Juanito's mother was Julia. She was called Tia Julia and she lived out near Cienfuegos. It was some distance but one could easily make the trip and it was a trip worth making.

"All right," Billings said carelessly as he jotted down some notes in the small book he carried. Then he bestowed a tip and turned toward a spot from which, at a cool, shining-topped table, he ordered a dry Martini.

He was going to Cienfuegos tomorrow, wild geese chase or not. But the next day's dawn was pink and purple and by the hour when Billings opened his heavy eyelids rain was falling. It was cold, too—one of those amazingly abrupt changes of temperature that are typical of warm countries having occurred during the night.

Going to Cienfuegos on such a day was out of the question. Billings must, he knew, go there as a sightseer who happened in a casual visit to stop to talk with the neighbors of Tia Julia. He wished fervently that he knew the language he heard on the streets through which he sometimes strolled, swinging a recently acquired cane with rather too many flourishes.

Billings dressed with many groans, being acutely stiff. He ate his breakfast at 11. When the skies cleared a bit, he decided, he would go to Morro Castle. He had never been there and it was one of the things that, in Havana, simply had to be done.

(To Be Continued)

Illness Lays Lows "Oldest Man"



Whether Zaro Agha is 156 years old as he claims, the venerable Turk looked like a very worn and tired old man as he lay on a hospital bed in Istanbul. If he recovers, Agha, who claims to be the world's oldest man, will submit to rejuvenation experiments.

Flapper Fanny Says



Many a man slips a ring on a finger to keep a belle off his toes.

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



SALESMAN SAM



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



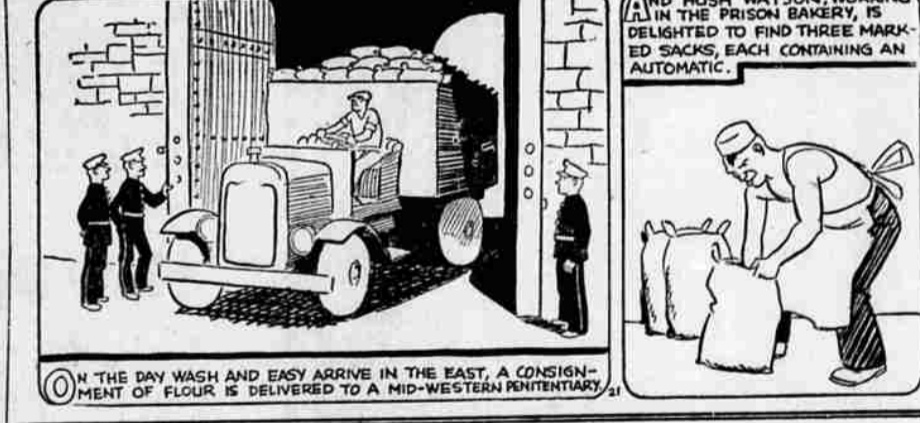
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



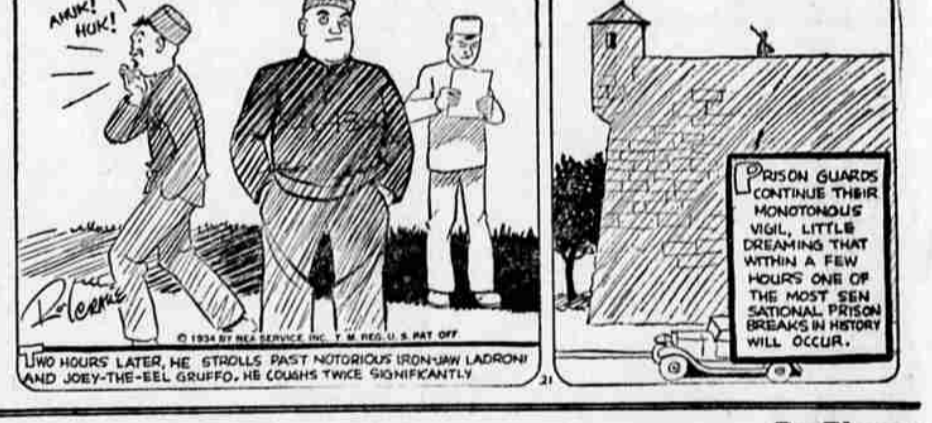
By Martin



WASH TUBBS



By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES - MOM 'N POP



By Cowan

