

CARIBBEAN CRISIS

BY EATON K. GOLDTHWAITE

COPYRIGHT, 1942, NEA SERVICE, INC.

ESCAPE AND MURDER

CHAPTER XX

TALCOTT paced the length of the deserted boat deck again and turned in anger. "MacDowell!" he called harshly.

From the depths of gloom by the davits beyond the funnel came a scrape of sound, and a hollow voice answered "Here!"

"Still hanging your head! What's so infernally important that you couldn't tell me in the cabin, that you had to send that steward just when I—" He was in the darkness then, groping. "MacDowell! Where the devil—"

A dipping shudder came into the ship's movement; a forward pitch into a deep trough of waves. And with it his answer, a crushing blow sweeping in a wide arc from behind. It glanced from the side of his head with enough force to hurt but not enough to cripple. Had his assailant been less solidly poised when the vessel's sudden dip came, Talcott's skull would have been smashed like a paper carton.

He gasped with pain and turned, grappling blindly. Another blow dropped him to his knees. Strong, wiry arms wound about him and he felt a solid, straining chest against his face. He held himself limp and the other dragged him to the rail. And when the attacker's arms slackened to lift him up, Talcott suddenly straightened his legs, driving the other back and against a davit.

The counter attack had been a complete surprise. Pressing for the advantage of time, Talcott moved in too hurriedly and another smacking blow from the leaded leather sent needles of pain through his shoulder. Grimly he grasped at a wrist, caught it firmly, moved in and quickly pivoted. A choking arm wound about his neck. He balanced, extended his right leg, and with all his strength heaved at the wrist.

With a cry of rage and frustration the other sailed over his head. Another dipping shudder, akin to the one that had saved him first, sent Talcott sprawling face downwards and rolled him under a lifeboat. The unprotected deck edge was perilously near; his groping right hand found no support but air. His left arm was doubled beneath him and thus he lay, struggling to hold fast. Had his assailant followed in then, Talcott would have been lost; the merest shove from a foot would have sent him overboard. But the other had had enough; his running feet pounded a telegraph on the steel plates of the deck.

Slowly, painfully, Talcott freed his left arm. His groping left hand found a cleat, and he was free.

THE boat deck was empty. Forward the lights of the wireless shack and the tiny glow of the binnacle on the bridge; they couldn't have heard because of the wind. The assailant had run forward, but he would scarcely run up there; officers didn't take too kindly to interruptions in their work. He must have gone down the stairs.

Talcott was at the foot of the stairs when the shocked scrutiny of a pair of old ladies brought him to an abrupt halt. Shrugging, he brushed himself and smoothed his rumpled clothing.

Inside the cocktail lounge he saw Halsey and Anne Paterson playing bridge with Martin Svenson and the ship's doctor. He avoided the door and moved around to the other side, passing the huddled figure of Professor Constantine, asleep in a chair. Passengers were there, leaning against the rail, conversing or looking at the water. A steward came past, bearing a blanket. Talcott stopped him. "Did you see a man run by here?" he asked.

Conversation at the rail was suddenly hushed. "No, sir, can't say as I did," the steward answered.

Talcott became suddenly aware of the fixed stares. "Must've been mistaken," he grunted and unhurriedly walked by the gauntlet of eyes.

He was in C deck corridor when abrupt suspicion caused him to stop before the door of the ugly bid-head who called himself Webber. Pressing his ear against the polished wood he was rewarded with a deep, regular snore.

No man who had been through what the attacker had been through could snore like that. Baffled, he entered his own cabin.

He switched on the light. MacDowell was apparently asleep; a blanket covered him to his chin and his face was turned to the wall. Talcott glared in the mirror. A nasty red welt showed in front of his ear; his face was smudged with soot; his collar was torn, and his once-immaculate jacket was wrinkled and grimy.

A towel end and powder repaired the damage to his face; the collar he removed, and with it the jacket. The shirt, too, was beyond hope and he peeled it off, and thus far disrobed decided to complete the job and take a shower.

Strange, how soundly MacDowell slept. Lucky for MacDowell; in his condition, sleep was the only thing that could help him.

Webber's door. A loud, double knock. The pitch of the snoring changed imperceptibly. The double knock was repeated and the snoring ceased. "Yes?" in Webber's voice.

"A wireless message for you, sir."

"Oh. It's my wife I guess. About the business— Just a moment—" The click of a light switch; faint scrape of the door, and footsteps sounded again in the corridor.

Talcott opened his door and peered out. The room steward was walking away. Strange, he could have sworn that Webber's voice sounded from outside the door. It had sounded as if the steward was on the inside. But there was the steward, turning into the companionway at the end of the corridor. He could have been mistaken.

In the exhilarating needles of the shower his body relaxed, but his mind leaped to double speed. Things had been happening fast; almost too fast. First, Webber the hairless, caught flat-footed eavesdropping. Was he just curious about his neighbors or did he fit in the picture somewhere? Talcott wished he could remember that vaguely familiar face. Too ugly to be forgotten; yet it remained in a haze, defying recognition and remembrance.

Then there was the business of the blank paper. Had Halsey played cagey, substituting the real report and turning it over to the purser for safekeeping? It didn't seem likely, not in the new light thrown on Halsey by June Paterson. What, then, was Struthers up to?

And the attack. He had gone to the boat deck supposedly in re-

sponse to a summons from MacDowell. Well, MacDowell would have to answer that one. Grimly he towelled himself, drew on his robe and crossed to his stateroom. MacDowell hadn't moved. With swiftly withdrawn breath Talcott leaped to the bunk and snatched away the blanket.

A spreading brown-red stain was creeping away from a sticky spot in the detective's back. (To Be Continued)

To meet our plane production program — 80,000 planes this year and 125,000 in 1943—will require 80,000,000 square feet of factory floor space this year and 180,000,000 more next year. Automotive plants will provide much of this space.

Read Classified Ads for Results

Fluorescent Lamps and Starters Available!

Also All Shapes and Sizes G. E. Mazda Lamps

UHLIG'S

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.

U. S. SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured U. S. Supreme Court justice.

10 Mast.

11 Organ of hearing.

12 Skills.

14 Bamboo-like grass.

15 Title.

17 Twelve months.

19 Hotel.

20 Head covering.

21 Tiny.

22 Desert.

24 North Dakota (abbr.).

25 Paving substance.

26 New Jersey (abbr.).

28 Music note.

29 Biscuits.

30 Name.

32 Dressed animal pelt.

33 Period.

35 Flakes of ice.

38 Self.

40 Morindin dye.

42 Form of.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

EDITH ROGERS

VERTICAL

13 Unlocked.

2 Compact mass.

3 Symbol for erbium.

4 500 sheets.

5 Boat paddle.

6 Forehead.

7 Sun god.

8 Attempt.

9 Go on foot.

10 Dispatch.

13 Travel by sea.

14 Skating arena.

15 Jumbled type.

16 Compass point.

18 Peruse.

20 Light brown.

22 Finish.

25 Rotates.

27 He is a.

29 Federal.

31 Foot.

34 Whip.

36 Lubricate.

37 Legal document.

38 Make a mistake.

39 Musical quality.

41 Observe.

44 Treaty.

46 Variant of.

48 Segment.

49 In place of.

50 Measure of area.

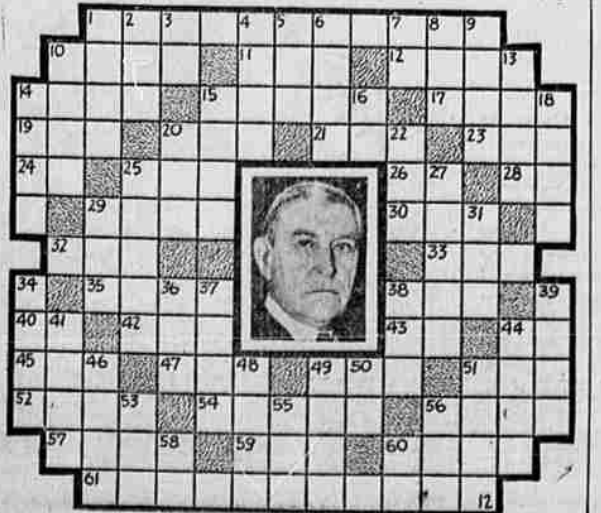
51 Part of plane.

53 Equality (prefix).

55 By.

56 Scurry.

58 Variant of.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



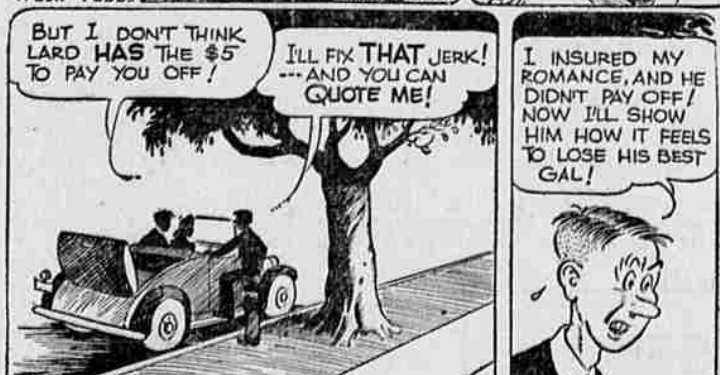
T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.



T. M. REG. U. S. PAT. OFF. COPY, 1942 BY NEA SERVICE, INC.