• SERIAL STORY

'I AM A MURDERER'

BY MORRIS MARKEY

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CHAPTER XXI

THUS you have been a witness, good people one and all, to the accomplishment of my life's purpose. You have seen the manner of it. Perhaps you would care to hear the method of it. Perhaps, too, to understand the reasons for its undertaking.

And go to a day not long after the ending of the First World War—to a snug cabin in the soaring forests of the Cascade Mountains in the State of Washington. It was a beautiful cabin, set beside a rushing river. And there were five people living in it. One of these was John Frye. Three others were John Frye's wife, and his growing boy, and his infant daughter. The fifth and last was Norman Tinker. John Frye and Norman Tinker were equal partners in a lustrous enterprise.

Norman Tinker was the man whom you have met in my writing, and seen die therein, under the name of Wesley Hope Merriwether—called Colonel.

John Frye and Norman Tinker were different sorts of men, altogether. Their partnership had come about in a manner which was, at least to John Frye, surprising.

Frye had come back from the wars in France to his wife and his son and his very new daughter, and he had brought with him certain disabilities of the body which would not be helped by the resumption of his job in the analytical laboratories of a Northern smelting company. His doctors told him to look out of doors for health and a long life. People told him—one man here and another there—that Norman Tinker was the fellow for him to see.

Tinker was a college man like himself, they said, but with a crazy passion for prospecting in new fields—gold, silver, platinum, anything. He had found some success, here and there, too. At least he was not working on a shoestring. He was the very man for John Frye to look up.

So John Frye did look him up, and found him in Chicago: found a keen-eyed, quiet-voiced man somewhat older than himself, a man who was cool, and distant, and a little difficult to know. Their first talk together was not greatly productive. Norman Tinker said that he had no new projects at the moment. He might, if he found one, find it useful to engage assistance. And in the meantime he would examine John Frye's record and attainments, in his own way, and privately.

Within a month, John Frye was summoned to another meeting. Norman Tinker wasted neither time nor words arriving at the point:

"I have learned—it doesn't matter how—of certain lands in the State of Washington which may yield valuable deposits. I have convinced myself that you can be of help to me. But it is necessary for me to conduct my examinations with the greatest possible discretion. Again, the reason does not matter. And so I make you a proposal:

"You and I will go to this country I speak of, and explore its possibilities. And you will be written in for one-third of anything we may find."

Which was a generous thing to do, indeed.

John Frye was immensely pleased. He was not a man of force and he had never been seasoned to many of the stern realities. Life had accommodated him to a philosophy of acquiescence, and to a slight shock of surprise when any fortune fell his way. If Norman Tinker had offered him a decent weekly wage, he would have been satisfied. How wonderful to become a partner!

It would not, perhaps, be exaggeration to say that John Frye was a weak man. Not morally, of course, but temperamentally. He was easily led by stronger men. But, like all people who are called weak, he had a perverse alloy of the thing which is known as stubbornness. And now this stubbornness took fire in a condition which he offered to Norman Tinker.

He was overjoyed at the opportunity. But he would not think of going on the expedition unless he could take his family with him. This was not in Norman Tinker's book, and he scoffed at the notion. It was absurd, and furthermore it was dangerous, he said. John Frye said, in reply, that his wife and children were absolutely necessary to him after his year in the wars.

So the strong man and the stubborn man wrestled the matter, and the strong man surrendered because he, also possessed of stubbornness though of a different weave, was determined that John Frye was his man.

I REMEMBER that cabin as if a precisely detailed painting of it were upon the wall before my eyes at this moment. It was like paradise. The Douglas firs that reached their magnificent spires toward the sky, the swift cold water, the beasts that came down to stare at us, the trout and the salmon that smelled so fine against the smell of coffee in the evening.

And I remember as vividly that night John Frye came in, very tired, with a sack full of new samples. They were, he said, from a rather curious outcropping in the next valley. He and Norman Tinker went to the workbench which they had built in the end of the room, and got down vessels and tools and bottled chemicals, while at the other end of the same room Martha Frye hummed to her baby girl and the hissing of the frying pan was loud in the air.

The next thing, two men were staring at each other and saying, "Good Lord, man—that can't be true!"

The new and curious outcropping which John Frye had found was a thing of inestimable worth. Early next morning the two men were gone, and they came back changed altogether from the two men of yesterday. For they were rich indeed, and the excitement of that knowledge was a grave thing to bear lightly.

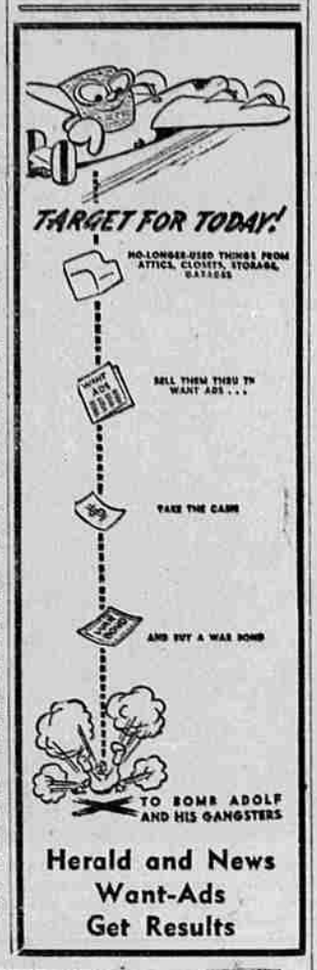
Martha Frye joined eagerly in their excitement, opening a bottle of red wine which she had saved against an illness and sharing the toasts to fortune which were lifted in loud voices. Even the boy—which boy was I—caught more than a touch of the fever and grew red with avarice, with the sudden, fabulous assurance that here were white ponies hitched to basket carts, and soda pop beyond all dreaming, and buckets of candy, and a tolerant generosity toward the lesser men of the school back home.

It was a night of hurly-burly, with the lad trying to understand when these mysterious creatures, the grown-ups, urged each other to be calm—urged that there might yet be a flaw in the great discovery.

There was no flaw. The next day's explorations, and the next day's, fortified every hope.

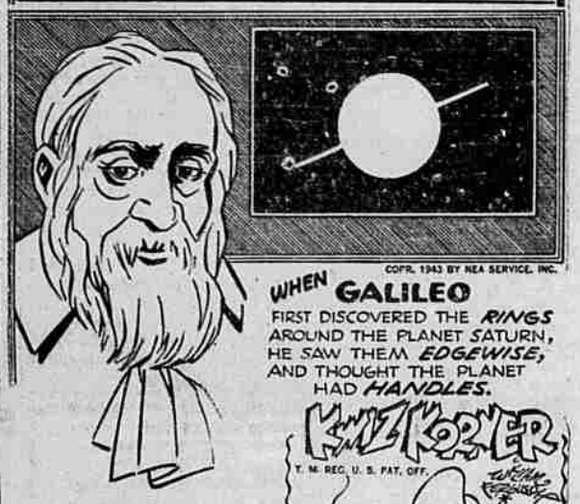
(To Be Continued)

Elephants like onions as well as peanuts.



THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ANSWER: Beating a drum.

NEXT: Geology teachers from other worlds.

SCREEN ACTRESS

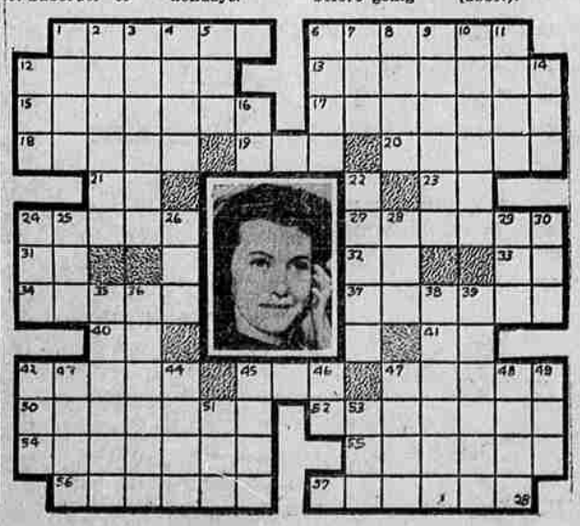
HORIZONTAL

1,6 Pictured movie actress.
12 Reach.
13 Those who merit.
15 Moistens.
17 Steamship
18 Foreign agents.
19 Swedish weight.
20 Pertaining to Switzerland
21 Names (abbr.).
23 Half-em.
24 Glorify.
27 Incline.
31 Sloth.
32 Symbol for tantalum.
33 Hawaiian bird.
34 Drops of eye fluid.
37 Itinerant.
40 Mother.
41 Symbol for erbium.
42 Animal.
45 Roof finial.
47 Suborder of Charadriiformes (zoo.).
50 Devices for opening.
52 Swerve.
54 Altar screen.
55 Loving.
56 Green sunfish.
57 She is a —— actress.

VERTICAL

1 Snare.
2 Type of fur.
3 Mellows.
4 Nights before holidays.
5 Siamese measure.
6 Direction.
7 Rodent.
8 Angers.
9 Chewer.
10 Old French measure.
11 Very (Fr.).
12 Paid notices.
14 Seniors (abbr.).
16 Therefore.
22 She —— in a road show before going to Hollywood.
24 Flying mammal.
25 Falsehood.
26 Call for help at sea.
28 Swiss river.
29 Age.
30 Negative word.
35 Unit of electrical current.
36 Showered.
38 Line anew.
39 Long, arched gallery.
42 High, craggy hill.
43 One who mimics.
44 Predict (Scot.).
45 Existence.
46 Fish.
47 Affirm.
48 Solar disk (Egypt).
49 Ever (poet.).
51 Man's name.
53 Et cetera (abbr.).

Answer to Previous Puzzle



Out Our Way
By J. R. Williams

Our Boarding House
With Major Hoople

Red Ryder

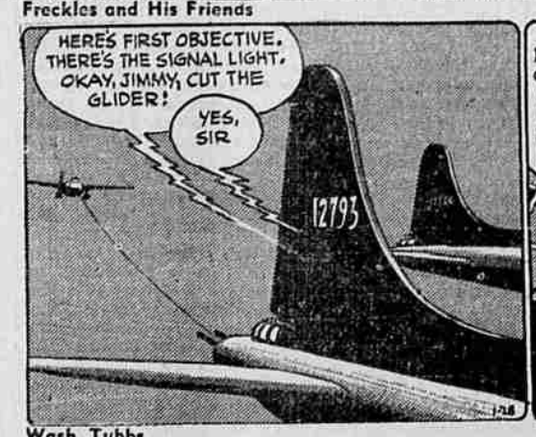
By Fred Harmon

Little Orphan Annie

By Harold Gray

Freckles and His Friends

By Blosser



Wash Tubbs

By Crane

Boots and Her Buddies

By Martin

Alley Oop

By V. T. Hamlin