

FU-MANCHU & COMPANY

SCRAPPLE

V—THE COUGHING HORROR

By SAX ROHMER

Nayland Smith stared at him fixedly. "A water rat? Now that you come to mention it, I perceive a certain resemblance—yes, but—he had been wearing a silk scarf about his throat and now he unwrapped it—did you ever see a water rat that could make marks like those?" Weymouth started to his feet with some muttered exclamation. "What is this?" he cried. "When did it happen, and how?" In his own terse fashion, Nayland Smith related the happenings of the night. At the conclusion of the story, "By heaven!" whispered Weymouth, "the thing on the roof—the coughing thing that goes on all fours, seen by Burke."

"My own idea exactly!" cried Smith. "Fu-Manchu," I said excitedly, "has brought some new, some dreadful creature from Burma!"

"No, Petrie," snapped Smith, turning upon me suddenly. "Not from Burma—Abyssinia!"

Within my view, from the corner of the room where I sat in deepest shadow, through the partly opened window it was screwed, like our own were rows of glass houses gleaming in the moonlight and, beyond that, orderly ranks of flower beds extending into a blue haze of distance. By reason of the moon's position, no light entered the room, but my eyes, from long watching, were grown familiar with the darkness, and I could see Burke quite clearly as he lay in the bed between my post and the window. I seemed to be back again in those days of the trouble that when first Nayland Smith and I had come to grips with the servants of Dr. Fu-Manchu. A more peaceful scene than this flower-planted corner of Essex I could not find it to imagine; but, either because of my knowledge that its peace was chimerical, or because of that outland consciousness of danger which, actually, or in my imagination, preceded the coming of the Chinaman's agents, to my somnolent silence throbbed electrically and the night was laden with stilly omens.

Alone, I sprang back across the room and took up the weapon which had been left in my charge earlier in the night. What information had Burke to tell? He had refused, for some reason, to discuss the matter of the evening, and now, acting the part allotted him by Nayland Smith, he feigned sleep consistently, although at intervals he would whisper to me his doubts and fears.

All the chances were in our favor tonight; for while I could not doubt that Dr. Fu-Manchu was set upon the removal of the co-officer of New York police, neither could I doubt that our presence at the farm was unknown to the agents of the Chinaman. According to Burke, constant attempts had been made to achieve Fu-Manchu's purpose, and had only been frustrated by his (Burke's) wakefulness. There was every probability that another attempt would be made tonight.

Any one who has been forced by circumstance to undertake such a vigil as this will be familiar with the marked changes corresponding with phases of the earth's movement which take place in the atmosphere at midnight, at two o'clock, and again at four o'clock. During those four hours falls a period wherein all life is at its lowest ebb, and every physician is aware that there is a greater likelihood of a patient's passing between midnight and four a. m. than at any other period during the cycle of the hours.

Tonight I became specially aware of this lowering of vitality, and now, with the slightest movement, I heard it. The chill at the very centre of my being, which but corresponded with the hourly, day-long nature at that hour, became intensified, keener, at the whispered words.

I rose stealthily out of my chair, and from my nest of shadows watched—watched intently—the bright oblong of the window.

Without the slightest heralding sound—a black silhouette crept up against the pane, as the silhouette of a small, malformed head, a foglike head, deep set in square shoulders. Malignant eyes peered intently in. Higher it rose—that wicked head—against the window, then crouched down on the sill and became less sharply defined as the creature stooped

to the opening below. There was a faint sound of sniffing.

Judging from the stark horror which I experienced myself, I doubted now if Burke could sustain the role allotted him. In the darkness of the room, it seemed to project from the black silhouette outside the pane to be thrust forward—and forward—and forward * * * that small hand with the outstretched fingers.

The unknown possesses unique terrors; and since I was unable to conceive what manner of thing this could be, which, extending its incredibly long arms, now sought the throat of the man upon the bed, I tasted of that sort of terror which ordinarily one knows only in dreams.

"Quick, sir—quick!" screamed Burke, starting up from the pillow. The queering hands had reached his throat!

Choking down an urgent need that I had of touching the thing which had reached through the window to kill the sleeper, I sprang across the room and grasped the rigid, hairy forearm.

Heaven! Never have I felt such muscles, such tendons, as those beneath the hairs! They seemed to be of steel wire, and with a sudden frightful sensation of impotence, I realized that I was as powerless as a child to resist that strange hold. Burke was making the most frightful sounds and quite obviously was being asphyxiated before my eyes! "Smith!" I cried. "Smith! Help! Help! for God's sake!"

Despite the confusion of my mind I became aware of sounds outside and below me. Twice the thump at the window coughed; there was an incessant, laslike crackling, then some abated words which I was unable to make out; and finally the staccato report of a pistol.

Sparling like that of a wild beast came from the creature with the hairy arms, and renewed coughing, but the steel grip relaxed not one iota. I realized two things—the first, that in my terror at the suddenness of the attack I had omitted to act as prepared; the second, that I had discredited the strength of the visitant, while Smith had foreseen it.

Desisting in my vain endeavor to pit my strength against that of the nameless thing, I sprang back across the room and took up the weapon which had been left in my charge earlier in the night. While I had been unable to believe it was necessary to employ this, a sharp and heavy, which Nayland Smith, when I had met him in Covent Garden, had specially brought with him, to the great amazement of Weymouth and myself.

As I leaped back to the window and uplifted this primitive weapon, a second shot sounded from below, and more fierce snarling, coughing, and guttural mutterings assailed my ears from beyond the pane.

Lifting the heavy blade, I brought it down with all my strength upon the nearer of those hairy arms where it crossed the window ledge, severing muscle, tendon and bone as easily as a knife might cut cheese.

A shriek—a shriek neither human nor animal, but grotesquely compounded of both—followed * * * and merged into a choking cough. Like a flash the other hairy arm was withdrawn, and some vaguely seen body went rolling down the sloping red tile and crashed on to the ground beneath.

With a second piercing shriek, louder than that recently uttered by Burke, walling through the night from somewhere below, I turned abruptly to the man on the bed, who now was becoming significantly silent. A candle with matches stood upon a table hard by, and my fingers far from steady, I set about obtaining a light. This accomplished, I stood the candle upon the little chest of drawers and returned to Burke's side.

"Blessed God!" I cried.

Of all the pictures which remain in my memory, of those of that dark enough, I can find none more horrible than that which now confronted me in the dim candlelight. Burke lay crosswise on the bed, his head thrown back and muzzling; one rigid hand he held in the air and with the other grasped the hairy forearm which I had severed at the elbow. His death grip, the dead fingers were still fastened, visibilia at his throat.

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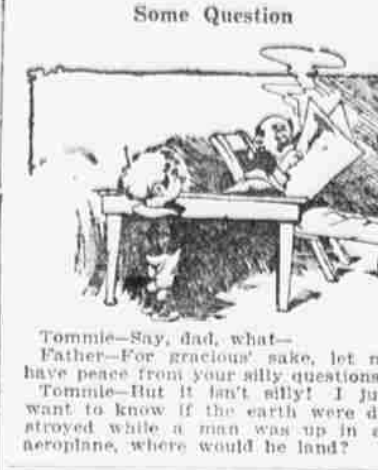
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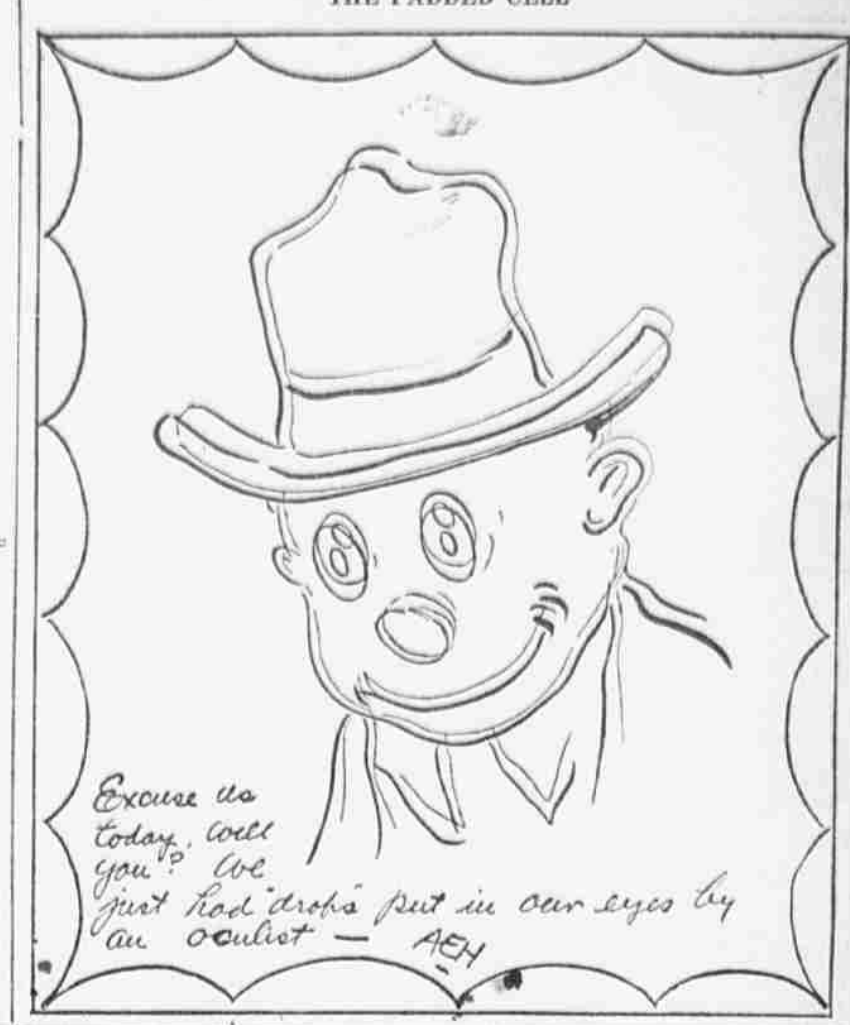
"Oh, John, dear! Rescue me, like they do at the movies!" —The Passing Show.



Tommie—Say, dad, what— Father—For gracious' sake, let me have peace from your silly questions! Tommie—But it isn't silly! I just want to know if the earth were destroyed while a man was up in an aeroplane, where would he land? —Penn Punch Book.



Fashion is a sly old dame. Soon as Leap Year's tread she hears, Does she veil each maiden's face? So the lads can't guess her years? —"Isn't It True?"



Excuse us today, will you? We just had drops put in our eyes by an oculist — A.E.H.

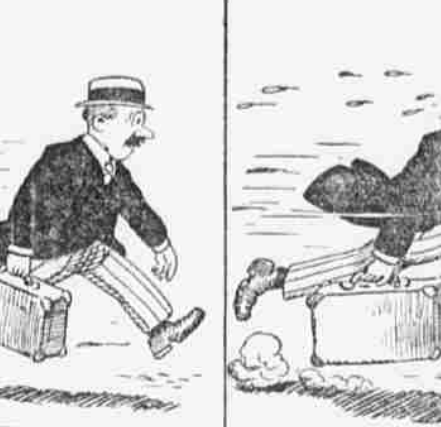
THE PADDED CELL



Jimmie—I gather this ring to be engaged to me. Tillie—What? Me wear that ring after yer former fiancée has worn the gold all out? Sev-ree!



Horrible! —London Opinion.



Spoiled the Scene —SOLICITOUS



Getrude—Yes, papa's sister, who is visiting us, came in just as Bill was about to steal a kiss. Fannie—Dear me, what an auntie climax!



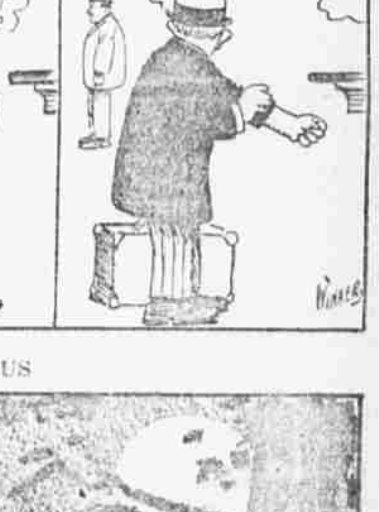
"The Bluebottle Dividends," by Earl Derr Biggers, author of "The Seven Keys to Baldpate," will begin in tomorrow's Evening Ledger.



Play Titles Travestied —AND THE WORST IS YET TO COME



Yes, Verily



An Example



HIS WIFE'S SUN-SHADE



First Reader—Some laws have more intelligence than their makers. Second Reader—Sure they have, I got one like that myself. She—I think women are far cleverer than men. He—How do you make that out? She—Well, take you and me for example.

Questions for Dec. 1st: (1) I had a word on my desk and Willie, the office boy, took the paper it was on and tore it up. I picked the letters out of the waste basket and all I could find were the two words "RED LEG." The first word I had was a Philadelphia newspaper, but I can't think of the name. Will you help me to find one word out of "RED LEG?" (10 credits). (2) What two Holidays in 1915 fall on the 25th of the month? (1 credit). (3) What is the widest street in Philadelphia? (3 credits). (4) What is the tallest building in Philadelphia? (5 credits).

Answers to our questions must be in by Saturday, Dec. 11, and the answers, with list of the 10 children sending in the best answers and getting the highest credit marks, will be published in our club news on Dec. 18, on our ROLL OF HONOR. By that time we will have something of special interest to tell you. Address all letters to Farmer Smith, Children's Editor, The Evening Ledger.

Dear Everybody—Do you ever forget? There are two kinds of getting—forgetting and getting. Getting means that some things which you have worked for come to you for your very own. For-getting means that you have lost something.

Once upon a time there was a little girl and her father asked her to put some coal on the fire and she FORGOT.

Now this young person was very fond of reading, so her father told her she must stop reading books for a whole week. For a whole day her eyes looked as though she had been peeling onions. Then her father told her to go down cellar and get a nice big piece of coal and wash it. He told her to tie a ribbon around the piece of coal and put it on her bureau.

This she did.

Afterwards her father let her read once more and she seldom says those awful words: "I FORGOT."

DO NOT FORGET TO SIGN OUR PLEDGE.

FARMER SMITH,
The Children's Editor, The Evening Ledger.

FARMER SMITH, The Children's Editor,
The Evening Ledger, Philadelphia, Pa.

I wish to become a member of your Rainbow Club and agree to DO A LITTLE KINDNESS EACH AND EVERY DAY. SPREAD A LITTLE SUNSHINE ALL ALONG THE WAY.

NAME _____
Address _____
Age _____
School I attend _____

A NEW DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN

FARMER SMITH'S RAINBOW CLUB

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GREAT DOINGS IN TOYLAND

"Oh, Miss B. Fuddle!" shouted Santa Claus one morning. "I want to dictate some letters to you." "Soon Miss B. Fuddle, Santa Claus' stenographer, came and he said to her: "I want to dictate some letters to my children this morning and you get Sugar Plum to fill the typewriter with words so that we can get to work right away."

Miss B. Fuddle found Sugar Plum in the garage trying to thaw out the automobile.

"Get some words for my typewriter and be quick," said the young lady.

Sugar Plum ran as fast as he could to the room where the words were kept for the typewriter and soon came back with an armful, which he carefully put in the typewriter, one at a time.

Pretty soon Miss B. Fuddle came and sat down at the machine and Santa Claus sat beside her and dictated what he wanted to say. When

he was all through, Miss B. Fuddle took the letter from the typewriter and handed it to Santa Claus. This is what he read:

Claus Santa, friend Your, an I. Kisses cherry 2000 and love of oceans With letters my for Ledger Evening The in look to you want I time to time from you to write will I. Christmas on you see to be surely

WORDS TO TYPE
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MISS B. FUDDE

shall and love my you send I: Philadelphia of Children Dear The To. "Why," exclaimed Santa Claus,