

THE PARADISE MYSTERY

By J. S. Fletcher

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THIS STARTS THE STORY

The little English cathedral town of Wrychester with its peaceful cloister, the scene of mystery and intrigue, the scene of a crime, the scene of a crime, the scene of a crime...

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

HE WAS wondering, all the time during which he reeled off these questions, if Mr. Gilwaters was wholly ignorant of the recent affair at Wrychester. He might be—a glance round his book-filled room had suggested to Bryce that he was much more likely to be a bookworm than a newspaper reader, and it was quite possible that the events of the day had small interest for him. And his first words in reply to Bryce's questions convinced Bryce that his surmise was correct and that the old man had nothing of the Wrychester Paradise mystery, in which Ransford's name had, of course, figured as a witness at the inquest.

"Gilwaters," he remarked. "You say that you saw Brake after the case was over. Did you learn anything?" "Nothing whatever," answered the old clergyman. "I got permission to see him before he was taken away. He did not seem very pleased or responsive to see me. I begged him to tell me what the real truth was. He was, I think, somewhat dazed by the sentence—but he was also sullen and morose. I asked him where his wife and two children—his one, a more beautiful—were. For I had already been to his private address and had found that Mrs. Brake had sold all the furniture and disappeared completely. No one—thereabouts, at any rate—knew where she was, or would tell me anything. On my asking this, he refused to answer. I pressed him—he said finally that he was only speaking the truth when he replied that he did not know where his wife was. I said I must find her. He forbade me to make any attempt. Then I begged him to tell me if she was with friends. I remember very well what he replied.—'I'm not going to say one word more to any man living.' Mr. Gilwaters," he answered determinedly. "I shall be dead to the world when I am asked this. I've been a fool—for ten years or thereabouts, but when I come back to it, I'll let the world see what revenge means! Go away!" he concluded. "I won't say one word more." And—left him.

"And—you made no more inquiries?" "I did what I could," replied Mr. Gilwaters. "I made some inquiry in the neighborhood in which they had lived. All I could discover was that Mrs. Brake had disappeared under extraordinarily mysterious circumstances. There was no trace whatever of her. And I speedily found that things were being said—the usual cruel suspicions, you know—'such as—'what?' asked Bryce. "That the amount of the defalcations was much larger than had been allowed to appear," replied Mr. Gilwaters. "That Brake was a very clever fellow who had got the money safely planted somewhere—Australia, or Canada, or some other far-off region—to await his release. Of course, I didn't believe one word of all that. But there was the fact—she had vanished! And eventually I thought of Ransford as having been Brake's great friend, so I tried to find him.

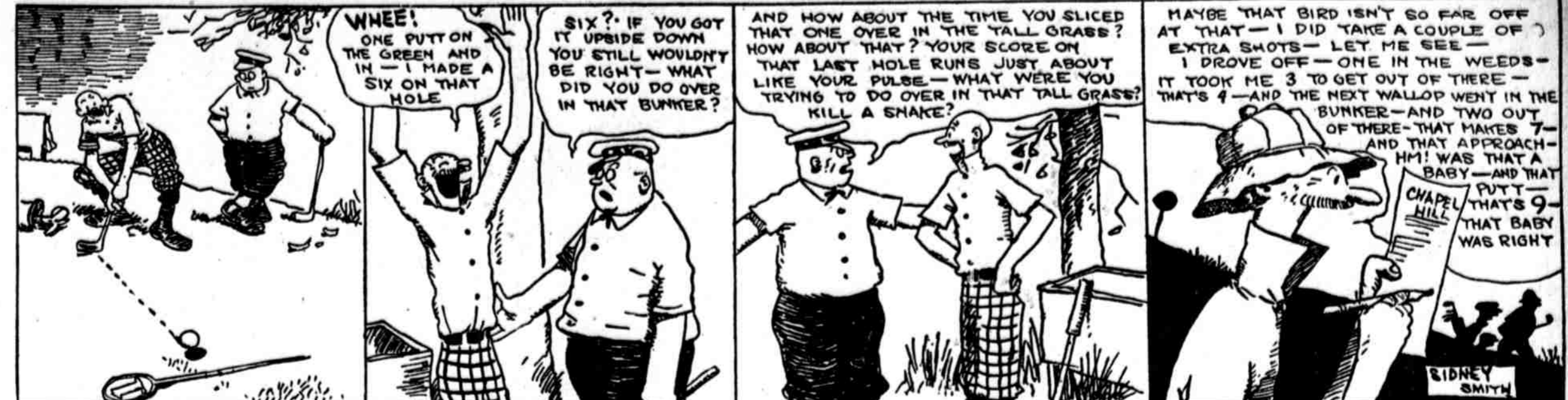
"And then I found that he, too, was up to that time had been practicing in a London suburb—Streatham—had also disappeared. Just after Brake's arrest, Ransford had suddenly sold his practice and gone—no one knew where, but it was believed abroad. I couldn't trace him, anyway. And soon after that I had a long illness, and for two or three years was an invalid, and—well, the thing was over and done with, and, as I said just now, I have never heard anything of any of them for all these years. And now—you tell me that there is a Mary Bewery who is a ward of a Doctor Mark Ransford at—where did you say?"

"At Wrychester," answered Bryce. "She is a young woman of twenty, and she has a brother, Richard, who is between seventeen and eighteen." "Without a doubt those are Brake's children!" exclaimed the old man. "The infant I spoke of was a boy. Bless me—how extraordinary! How long have they been at Wrychester?" "Ransford has been in practice there some years—a few years," replied Bryce. "These two young people joined him there definitely two years ago. But from what I have learned he has acted as their guardian ever since they were mere children." "And—their mother?" asked Mr. Gilwaters. "Said to be dead—long since," answered Bryce. "And their father, too. They know nothing of their mother's name, anything. But, as you say—I've no doubt of it myself now—they must be the children of John Brake." "And have taken the name of their mother?" remarked the old man. "Had it given to them?" asked Bryce. "They don't know," replied Mr. Gilwaters. "Our old governess! Dear me!" "I'm going to put a question to you," continued Bryce, leaning nearer and speaking in a low, confidential tone. "You must have seen much of the world, Mr. Gilwaters—men of your profession know the world, and human nature, too. Call to mind all the mysterious circumstances, the veiled hints, or that trial. Do you think—have you ever thought—that the false friend who the counsel referred to was—Ransford? Come now."

(CONTINUED MONDAY)

THE GUMPS—A Couple of Extra Shots Among Friends

By Sidney Smith



PETEE—Footprints in the Sands

By C. A. Voight

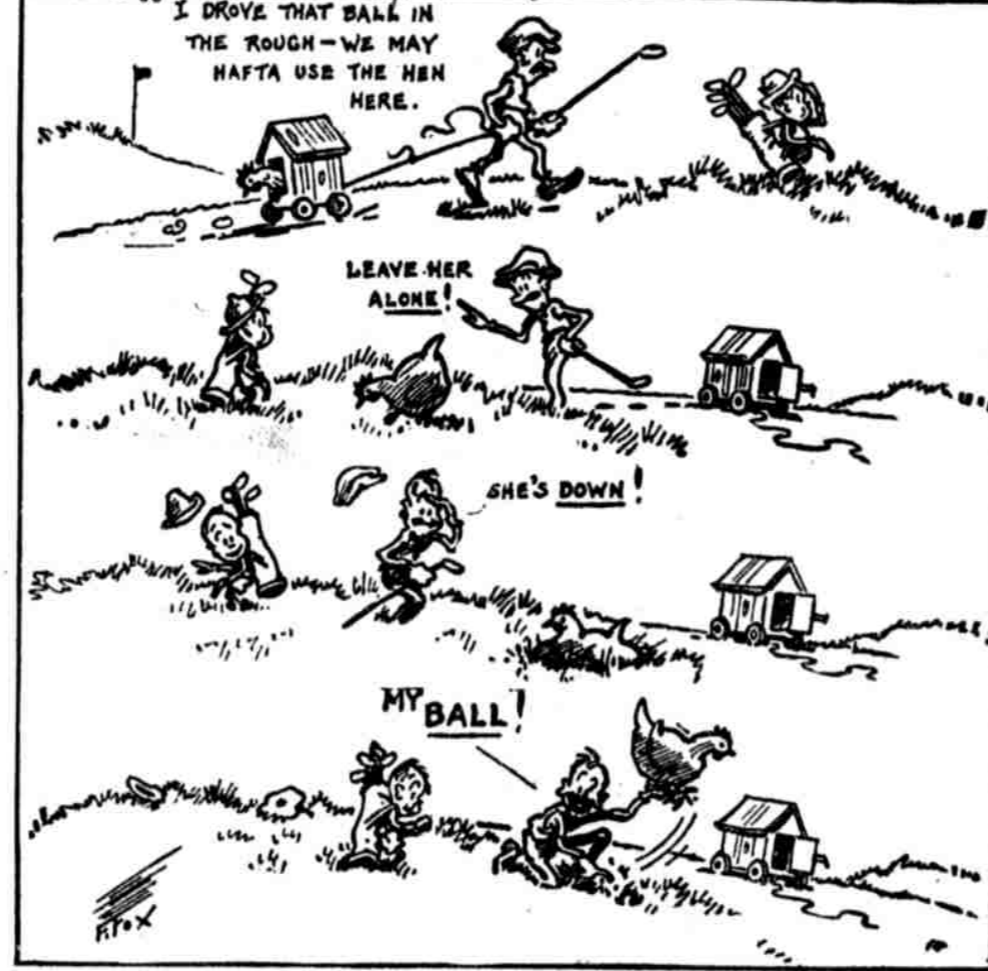


The Young Lady Across the Way

Golf Hint to the Player Who Keeps Losing Balls in the Rough

SCHOOL DAYS

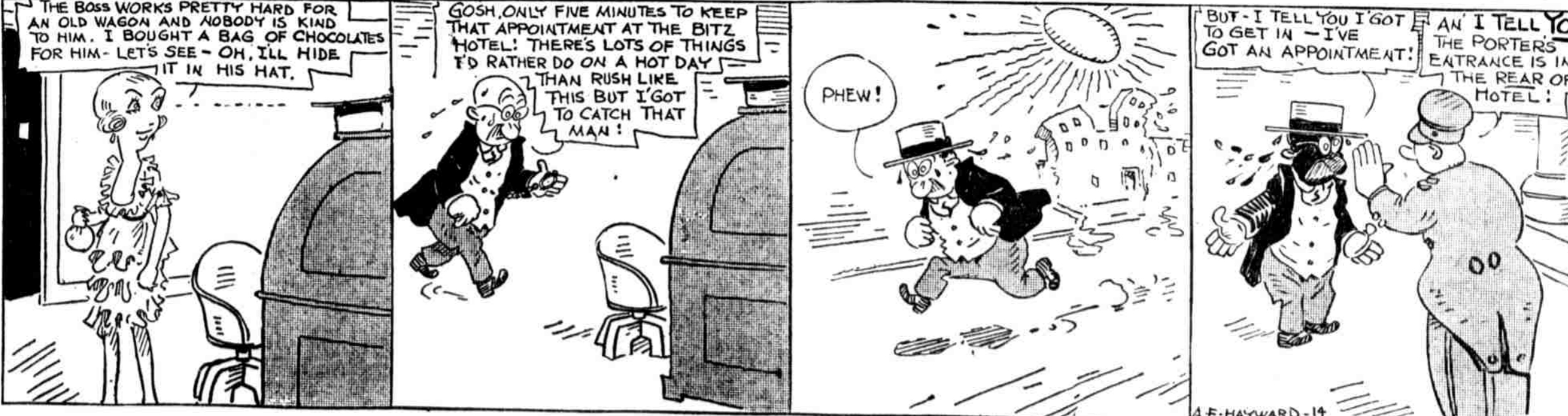
By DWIG



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Miss O'Flage Is Kind to the Boss

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By Hayward



"CAP" STUBBS—The Alarm at Last Meets With Success

By Edwina

