

HOW MANY CARDS?

By ISABEL OSTRANDER

Author of "The Island of Intrigue," "Suspense," "Ashes to Ashes," etc.

SYNOPSIS
 Es-Roundman Timothy McCarty, Esq., followed a figure whose type had been well known to him in the old days—that of an underdog, narrow-shouldered, but the suspect re-appears instantly and in much perturbed manner. When pulled up by McCarty, the man that he had "nothing to do with what's in here," Clancy, the great detective, demands "what's this business about?" "I've been trying to get you out of here," Clancy said, "but you won't let me do it there, so I've got to take you along with me." Clancy declared briefly, and did not.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES
 A few more search they locating a desk telephone on the writing table beneath a bell-shaped bronze ornament, and the policeman called up the precinct station and had the message satisfaction knowing that the message was relayed to the borough headquarters.

"It's too big entirely for them to handle," declared McCarty contemptuously, when the other had hung up the receiver. "I'll put a call through myself to general headquarters and slip them off. Maybe my old pal, Inspector Druet, might be there and could hang along up here before the gumpies from the bushes have a chance to ball up the game. It's highly irregular, but I'm an old citizen now, by the grace of my uncle—may God rest his soul—and I'm free to do as I please."

Inspector Druet, seated at his desk in the homicide bureau, there presently came over the wire a well-known voice, husky with ill-suppressed excitement. "Mac, you old scoundrel!" he exclaimed in affectionate wrath. "Where have you been keeping yourself, and what are you doing this time of night?" "I'm mixing in high society, sir," McCarty's tones were cautious and respectful. "I'm in a grand private house up on the avenue, facing the park, just above the third side entrance—of the park, I mean, sir—and there'll be quite a little party here soon. I'm thinking, maybe you'd like to get in a little ahead."

"What is it? Where are you?" The inspector's own tones had crisped. "Mac, have you tumbled headforemost into another?" "The house of Mr. Eugene Creveling, sir; him they used to call Millionaire Mac. Clancy is here with me and a young crook we called by the way, but none of the family seems to be at home except himself, and we found him with a bullet in his heart from an army gun."

"I'll be with you," the inspector said briefly and the two receivers clicked in unison. "I would never have been known until heaven knows when if you hadn't nabbed this bird here." Clancy spoke with reluctant but irrefragable honesty. "By the way, Saint Peter, Mac, you've pulled off more stunts since you left the force than when you were on it. First that girl who was flung out the window of the Glamorgan and then the other one that was strangled in the crime museum."

"Was Terbone, the great scientific detective, that got at the truth in the first case and the inspector himself who did the work in the other," McCarty remarked with dignity. "I just poked around like the old has-been I am, but there comes a time when you'll be doing me a favor, Clancy, if you'll just forget I'm here until you're asked to tell what you know of it. I'd like to snipe around a bit on my own account till the inspector gets here."

"How do we know it isn't suicide, anyway?" demanded Clancy, as the matter of the police going grew louder on the air and his companion made for the door. "Because there are no powder marks," Clancy replied shortly. "If he'd held that cannon against his breast and fired it the powder would have been sprinkled all over the front of him."

As the automobile from the borough headquarters drove up before the door, McCarty dodged into the room next to the study. It proved to be a breakfast room, and the ex-roundman whirled softly to himself as he cautiously closed the door after finding and turning on the wall switch, which made the single low light over the table burst into a golden glow.

The table was laid for two and the remains of a supper were spread upon it, while an empty quart champagne bottle stood upon the floor and a second one reposed in the cooler, in the bottom of which a small quantity of ice still remained unmelting. "Quarter to 2!" he muttered, then turned his attention to the table itself. The food upon one plate was scarcely touched, but bread crumbs were scattered all about it and the wine glass was empty. On the other hand, the second plate had been cleaned save for fragments, half a roll lay broken and the glass was half full of dead champagne. Near at hand was an ash tray containing a stub of a cigarette and another unsmoked but broken in two.

McCarty was turning away when a light in the heavy pile of the close to the champagne bucket, something caught his eye. It was a broken cigarette holder, he picked it up and a shamesily put it in his pocket. The subdued purring of a second motor car to his ears and he left the room, flung on his hat, hurrying across the rotunda, flung on his house door. Inspector Druet was descending the steps.

"Come in, sir," McCarty urged superfluously. "The men are here from the borough headquarters and they are here for a grand session in the room where Mr. Creveling was killed—if it is he, his former superior into the breakfast room and pointed to the table. "Wherever the servants and the rest of the family have got to, there was two men here, sir. One of them was a young fellow, too interested in good food, though his wine, but at a moment before he finished smoking, then he didn't take it with him. The other was nervous or angry or scared, his wine, he drank his bread, drank broke his cigarette in two and maybe in the next room is lying dead on the floor. What's the answer, sir? It's up to you."

CHAPTER II
 The Voice on the Wire
 The inspector approached the table and gazed thoughtfully down upon the array of porcelain and silver and glass. "You're getting to be quite in Wade Mac, but you're right, I think," he observed. "If Creveling was here, where the food is almost untouched and the

CONTINUED TOMORROW

THE GUMPS—Andy! Aren't You Ashamed?

By Sidney Smith



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Mary Doodle at Bat

By Hayward



The Young Lady Across the Way

The Terrible-Tempered Mr. Bang Destroys His Own Evidence

By Fontaine Fox

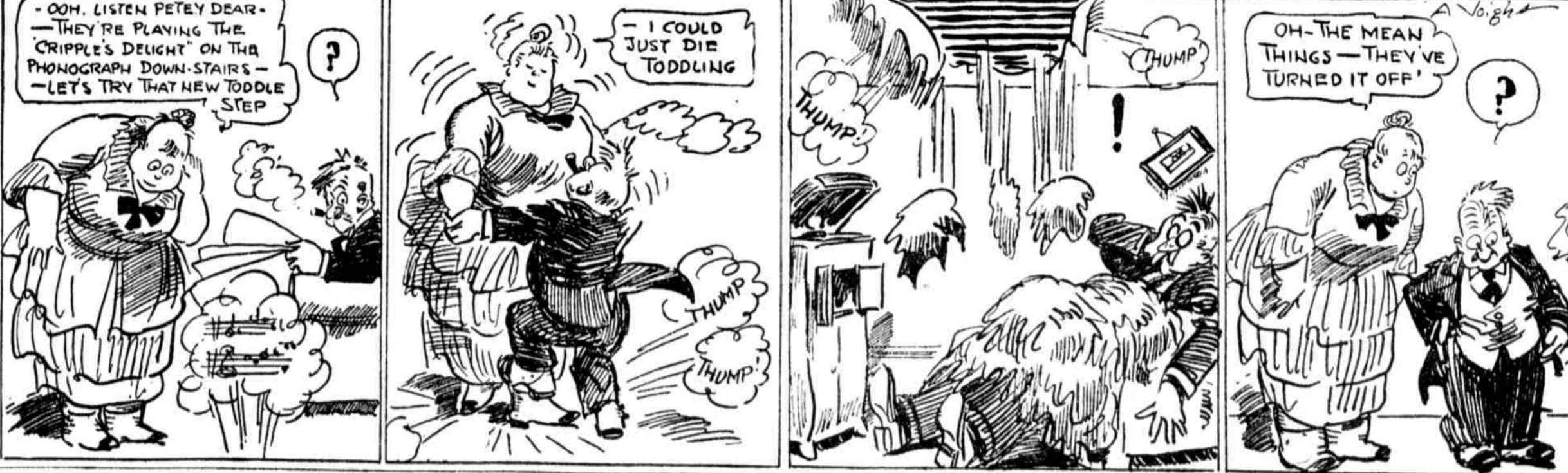
SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG



PETEY—The Man Downstairs Was Affected Also

By C. A. Voight



THE CLANCY KIDS—However, Timmie Isn't Averse to Hav ing Ice Cream Out of the Window

By Percy L. Crosby

