

By Sidney Smith

# HOW MANY CARDS?

By ISABEL OSTRANDER

Author of "The Island of Intrigue," "Suspense," "Ashes to Ashes," etc. Copyright, 1921, by Robert M. McBride & Co.

"Will you send for him, sir? I'll explain while he's on the way down. I want to ask him a few questions along a different line than we took with him before."

Inspector Druet pressed the buzzer in his desk and when his subordinate appeared, briefly gave the order. Then he closed the door once more he sat in his chair.

"Go on. What's the idea? Don't try to have him charged, Mr. with a crime we can't prove on him or this time the press will howl for my official time."

"They've howled for it more than once before, sir, but it hasn't helped yet." Mr. Creveling smiled affectionately at his chief and then his face grew serious.

"I'm not going to bring any charge whatever against the young crook, but instead with your permission I'm going to tell him if he'll come down as easy as we can if he'll come down with a little information."

"Information?" the inspector repeated with raised eyebrows.

"Didn't I have him on the carpet down here for three hours on Friday? Your own statement proves that he couldn't have fired that shot, and he beat it the minute he found the body."

"Yes, but why did he pick on the Creveling house as the first place?" Mr. Creveling asked suddenly.

"He was not sauntering along looking for a likely lay when I saw him first; he was on the job and knew where the was on the job and knew where the was on the job."

"What do you mean?" the inspector asked. "You don't think he was working alone then?"

"Alone, maybe, but he was not wandering along the avenue looking for the first open window to crawl through. I don't say he was working under orders, but he'd either been tipped or else he'd found out there were valuables in the house and it is not any too well guarded just now. Something steered him toward Creveling, sir, and I'm going to have it out of him."

But when Bodansky was brought in he did not at first find the matter as simple as he had anticipated.

"Look here, Joe, I suppose you know you're in for a stretch?" Mr. Creveling began impressively when a glance from Inspector Druet put the interrogation into his hands.

Bodansky grinned foolishly, but the gleam of shrewdness lingered in his eyes.

"I ain't done noddin'," he answered doggedly. "Course I had de gat an' de jack an' de keys on me, but it's a foist offense, barrin' dat stretch an' de reformatory an' I'll get off light."

"What makes you think so?" demanded Mr. Creveling.

"Do you suppose your gang would bother to have any wires pulled to get you off, you poor little runt of a knife-livered piker? That Lexington avenue gang of cheap crooks have only been kidding you if you think they stand in with the ward boss, let alone anybody higher up."

"I ain't kiddin'," vouchsafed Bodansky, slumping comfortably forward in his chair with his bullet head uncovered between his hunched shoulders like that of a turtle.

"I didn't have noddin' to do with 'em, I didn't have noddin' to do with 'em, I didn't have noddin' to do with 'em."

"Well, I had a steer, didn't I?" Bodansky retorted. "I'd spotted him an' I laid low an' watched his joint. Dere's a couple of odder fences dat I know—by sight—an' I lays 'em on goin' in to him an' right dere me does gets kind of frost-bit, for I'm wise dat his dump must be a sort of clearin' house for de rest an' him de king pin of dat particular bunch, but I didn't know dat he was de main guy of all—de head go-between for Bronheim himself—till I sees Spanish Lou an' Diamond Harry sneakin' in de side door."

A quick glance pregnant with meaning passed between Mr. Creveling and his chief. Bronheim had been the most notorious fence on the East Side and one of the best of the officers of the police department to locate the go-between they knew must exist.

"The Bronheim's doing a stretch now up the river," Mr. Creveling asserted.

"Sure, but he gets out in 'ree mont's, an' de're roundin' up de organization again," Bodansky pulled himself up suddenly.

"Say, I don't know dat, I'm just talkin' rough me hat! I ain't got noddin' on Kosakoff at dat. It ain't a crime for a swell guy to go over to de East Side to sell de family jewels, an' as for Spanish Lou, Harry, dey might have refuted, an' you dere peaceable, like I done to buy some tin for dere girls. I only got cold feet like I told you, an' I laid low 'n' by me."

"You've gone too far to stop now, Joe," the inspector said sternly. "You come through with the whole business or we'll put you on the stand against Kosakoff. Who were the other fence you saw going into his place?"

But Joe Bodansky's suddenly aroused suspicion that, in his own parlance, he was being "played for a con-ey" had crystallized into certainty with the eagerness of the inspector's attitude, and once more he slumped in his chair.

A film seemed to glaze his close-set eyes and it was as if it was in the sing-song whine of the habitual crook.

"Ain't I told you I only know 'em by sight? One of de gang—I forgot which account 'em out to me once, but he might have been kiddin' me. As for Harry and Spanish, I never laumped 'em before in me life; I just got a hunch it was dem from seem' deir wings in de papers when Bronheim was tried. Honest 'Gawd."

"Send him back, sir," Mr. Creveling urged in a rapid undertone to the inspector. "You'll get nothing more out of him this day, and we got a good lead as it is. I want to get out on the job without losing any time."

Late that afternoon Mr. Creveling presented himself once more at the Creveling house and to his request for an interview with Mrs. Creveling the butler brought an affirmative and even cordial response.

"You can go right up, sir. I think Mrs. Creveling was about to send down for your inspector, anyway, for there was a scene this morning between 'em and that Mr. Terhune that I couldn't see 'em get on, and what I missed Yvonne, the maid, told us at lunch."

"She ain't satisfied with 'ow 'e's conducting of de case, to put it mild, sir, and she told Mrs. Waverly as 'ow she was going to find out what progress you was making."

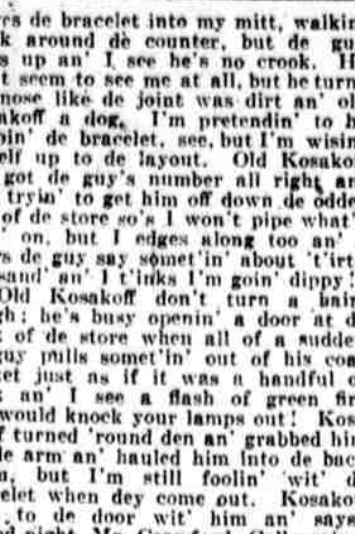
As before, Mr. Creveling found Mrs. Creveling in her boudoir, but this time she was pacing the floor restlessly and a faint red color glowed in either cheek, while Mrs. Waverly, curled up on the window seat, watched her with an inscrutable look in her long, feline eyes.

"I am glad you have come, Mr. Creveling," Mrs. Creveling gestured imperiously toward a chair. "You were here yesterday, I understand, but the doctor had counseled absolute rest for a faint spot, and I can't rest, until I know who killed my husband! Have you come with news for us?"

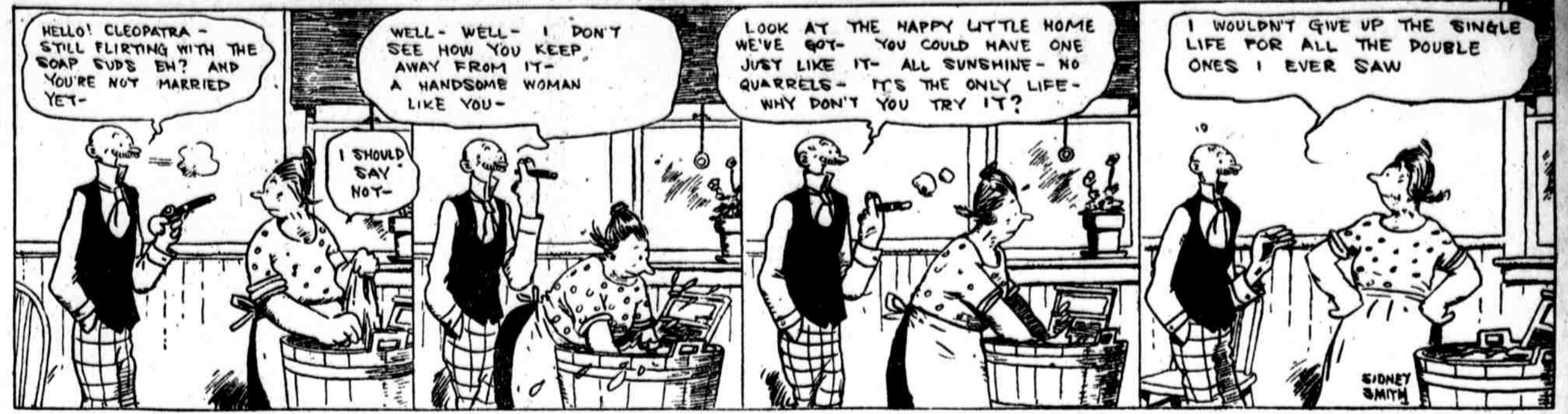
"It's nothing to you how we get our dogs, Joe. Go on with your story and give me it to us straight!"

"De minute I got mine I beat it across de street to Kosakoff's place, like I tellin' youse," Bodansky said, like a man with an injured air. "It was shutters, but I was just puttin' up his let me in. He was flushed me twenty an' let out of de window when de door opens an' in comes a regular swell. He's an' his coat collar creased up like he's scared of somebody seeing him at right. I says to myself, 'Dis Kosakoff's a fence, all right an' dat guy's some high-class crook.'"

Kosakoff gives him de o-o and



THE GUMPS—Let Well Enough Alone



## SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Boss Is Full of Pep Again

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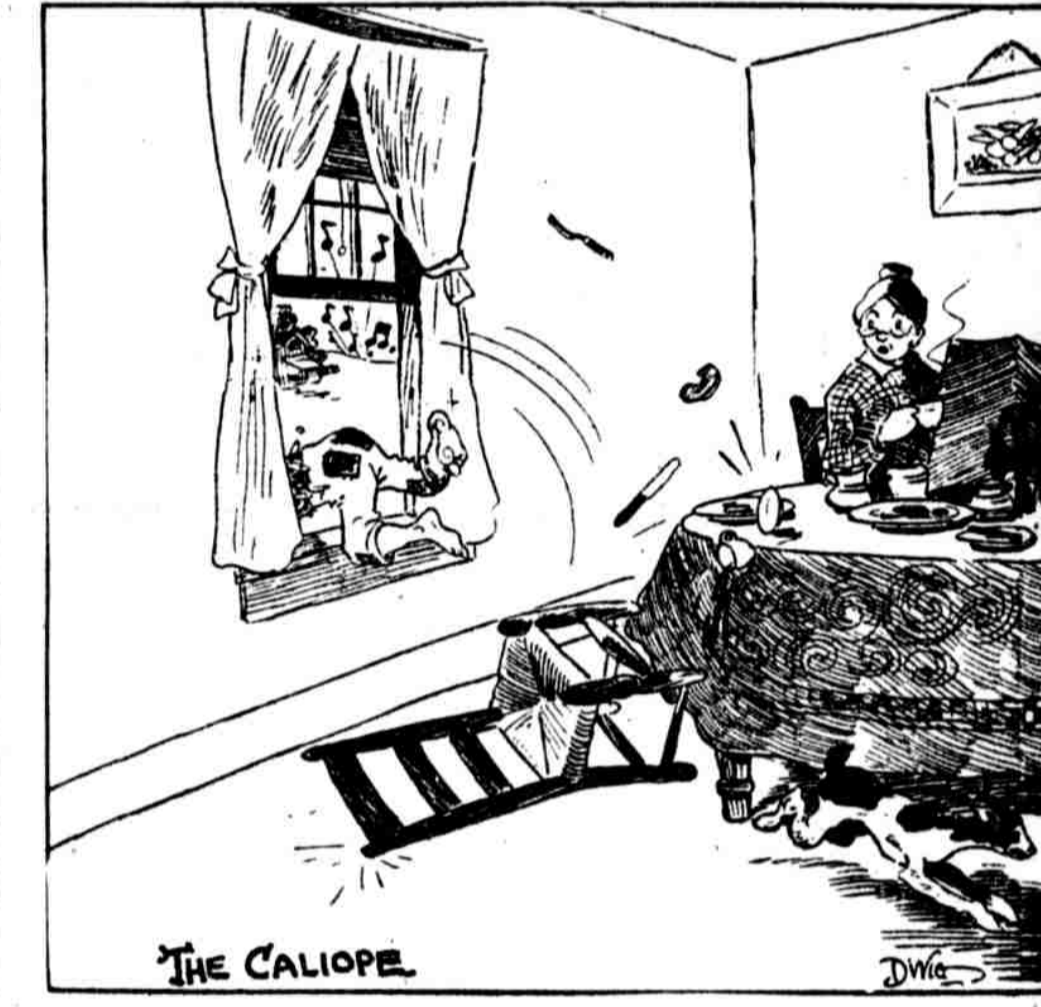
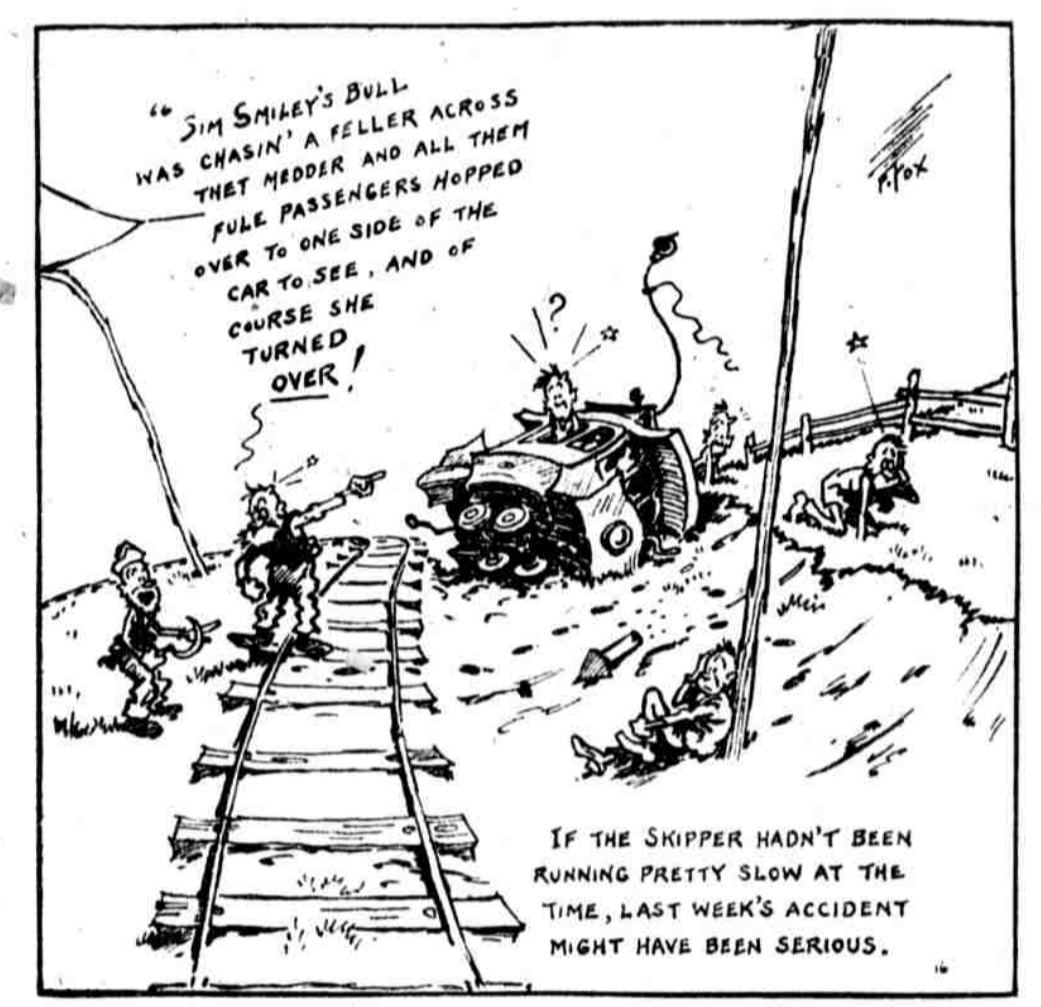
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