

Great Grief!

By
CHARLES
BRACKETT

Illustrated by
HENRY DAVIS

The Story Thus Far:

VICKY BOND returns to Chatfield from Paris to find that Mrs. Edith Viereck, prospective divorcee, whom she detests, has wormed her way into Vicky's own circle and that Dolly Tillinghast has been nice to her. Dolly and Vicky are intense but not inseparable lovers, for Vicky wants her own way. Vicky teases Dolly about Edith till, in a rage, he calls Vicky the most exasperating woman in the world and goes on a yachting trip. Next day the papers announce his marriage.

Smarting under the sympathy of Edith and others, Vicky says she was married first—to a master bootlegger, Clovis d'Auvergnat, alias Frederick Brown. It turns out that it was another Tillinghast who got married, but Vicky must see her lies through.

She therefore announces that Clovis is dead—died in some mysterious bootlegging way, so there can be no funeral. Dolly Tillinghast returns, tells Vicky that she can't get away with it with him, so, bound to make him believe her, she announces that Clovis' body is coming on.

Then Vicky in desperation writes Gennery Bond, her cousin, the truth and says he must have a wax figure sent on in a coffin.

Then arrives a note from her absent maid, Hester, saying she is returning and a telegram from Alice Campbell Higgins, Bloomington, Illinois, announcing that she is coming on to discover what Frederick Brown Vicky married. In answer to a previous message Helen Vaughn, friend of Vicky's, had written that it was not any Frederick Brown whom Miss Higgins could have known. Vicky reads the telegram and hands it to Helen.

"IT IS for you," Vicky said humbly. Helen read it.

"Why, that's the woman who wrote the letter to you!" she exclaimed. "Yes, this comes from Bloomington, Illinois. She's coming on."

"Well a lot of good it will do her," Vicky said.

"It may relieve her mind to see him."

"She's certainly not going to see him."

"Vicky! I should think, after you've been through so much, you'd feel sorry for her."

"She should take my word," Vicky sniffed. "See him, indeed! I don't expect to see him myself."

"You what!"

"I certainly don't expect to have the coffin opened."

"Oh, Vicky!" Helen Vaughn said, and for a moment Vicky thought she was going to cry, and even Lizzie, who was mopping up some coffee which had been spilled when Vicky was grasping for the telegram, paused and said protestingly, "Aw, Miss Bond!"

"Does that seem so very surprising?" Vicky asked. "It seems to me the only civilized thing to do."



Dolly was at the foot of the stairs, his wonderful smile shining up at her

"It doesn't have to be opened at the funeral perhaps," Helen Vaughn began, "but I certainly think it would look very queer—"

"We won't discuss the matter now," Vicky told her grandly, "and I think I'm getting my headache again and will be left alone. The only thing I feel up to today is answering the telephone. Connect my extension, and don't pay any attention if it rings downstairs."

"But I should think that would be the very worst thing for your headache!"

"It won't and I want to feel that I'm doing something. Have you happened to hear what's happened about Edith Viereck's divorce?"

"No, I haven't," Helen confessed. "I've been so busy."

"Well if Edith Viereck should call today I'll see her, and bring me any telegram the instant it arrives."

"I'm afraid you're in a terribly nervous state," Helen fussed affectionately. "I wonder if I oughtn't to have a doctor see you."

Vicky had to shoo her and Lizzie from the room.

She was so tired of bed that she rose, took a tub, put on another of Lucy Faraday's creations, and applied a splendid pallor to her face. She then tried to read a book lying on her chaise longue, but not hearing from Gennery had made her too nervous. After about an hour and a half more Vicky put in a long distance call for him in New York.

WHILE she was waiting for it Helen Vaughn tapped at the door, opened it, said: "There's somebody you said you'd like to see," and produced Edith Viereck from behind her.

"Oh, 'ou poor 'ittle dirl!" Edith Viereck mouthed, coming into the room, and Helen withdrew, beaming at the reunion. Helen loved amity.

"Don't let's talk about my troubles," Vicky said with a look of fugitive saintliness. "Helen told me last night you'd had news, too. Was it about your divorce?"

"Yes, it was," Edith Viereck said, in a perfectly adult voice. "What do you think Walter Viereck has done now? The meanest trick. He's disputing my residence in Pennsylvania."

"I didn't know you lived in Pennsylvania."

"I don't, but I reside there. I go down twice a month, and you know no gentleman disputes a thing like that anyway."

"Was that why you wanted Dolly Tillinghast?"

"Yes, it was. You see Adolphus has been so sweet about my divorce, and I haven't any other great big man to—"

At that moment the telephone rang. "Pardon me," Vicky said, and seized the receiver. "Yes, this is Miss Bond speaking. Hang up the other receiver, Lizzie. I'm answering as I said I would."

"Your New York call," Central told her.

"If you'll wait in my dressing-room," Vicky suggested to Edith Viereck.

Edith went into the dressing-room but failed to shut the door.

Gennery's voice came at last, rather grumpy.

"Hello, Gennery," Vicky said.

"Lo, Vicky."

"You got my letter?"

"Yep."

It was just like Gennery not to help out.

"Is it all right?"

"Yep."

"On what train?"
"Shipped at twelve noon."
"That means the seven o'clock?"
"Yep."

"Are you coming?"
"Nope. Busy."

"You understood, Gennery?"
"Nope."

"Thank you a thousand times anyway. You're a lamb."

"G'by."

Feeling in her relief, that she could deal with Edith Viereck without danger to her blood vessels, Vicky went into her dressing-room.

"Funeral arrangements," she said.

Edith had undergone a terrific relapse into infantilism.

"Does 'oo know when sad fings are going to happen yet?" she asked.

"Tomorrow. That was my cousin Gennery Bond saying he couldn't be here."

"Oh, yes. We had a 'ittle talkfest wif Helen Vaughn when she was coming from posting your letter to him last night?"

"You and Dolly Tillinghast?" Vicky helped to bring the conversation back to its muttens.

"You were just telling me about Dolly Tillinghast and your divorce."

"Well, Adolphus knows Walter Viereck's lawyer, and so I told Adolphus the bad naughty fng I'd been freaterened with, and Adolphus offered to go to New York and tell him it wasn't nice to treat poor Edie so."

"Dolly hasn't gone to New York?"

"Yes, he has. And he says with just one big man to man powwow all poor Edie's troubles can be blowed away, puff, puff. Only then she'll be a divorced lady."

"When did Dolly go?"

"On the midnight, and I'll have to telephone him wight'away 'ause he said if sad fings were going to be tomorrow he'd take a train back to be here in time."

"Why in the world should he be here?" Vicky asked. "I don't care whether he's here or not."

"But he wants to be here. Adolphus is very, very fond of you, Vicky Bond. He wouldn't not be here for worlds and worlds. Now what can Edie do for 'ou? Edie loves to help."

"I'm afraid the only thing, at present," Vicky said, "is to leave me alone. My headache seems to be coming back."

"Oh poor 'ittle Vicky!" Edith moaned.

"Ou poor 'ittle fng!"

SHE left, shedding proffers of assistance to the sill of the door.

Dolly Tillinghast in New York and likely to look up Gennery! Vicky flew back to the phone but before she had a



"Is it Dolly?" she called down in a rich, sad voice

chance to get even the long distance operator Helen Vaughn was at her door.

"Edith says it's coming at seven! I'm sorry to disturb you but there are so many arrangements to make."

"Just make them, please, and don't bother me."

"But which undertaker do you want?"

"Do we have to have an undertaker?"

"Oh, yes. They won't send it up from the station on an express wagon, you know."

Vicky had a feeling that Dolly was getting nearer and nearer Gennery's house.

"Get whatever one you want."

"Carroll has nicer chairs," Helen meditated, "but Bloom is really awfully sweet. And about the service? Shall I get Mr. Marshall, or is he a Catholic?"

"I'm sure I don't know, but Dr. Marshall will do. Clovis was nothing if not broadminded."

"Burial in the family plot, I suppose?"

That really was awful. To put a perfect stranger with four generations of Bonds. The Bonds had never been a gregarious family in the least. Still, Vicky supposed it had to be done, and perhaps it would only be a load of stones anyway. Vicky hoped so at the moment.

"Oh, yes," Vicky agreed.

"Any choice as to where?"

"If you could find a place near Uncle Edmond."

Uncle Edmond had been a bachelor and quite sociable as Bonds went.

"I guess that's all."



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"And can you use some other telephone?"

"Really, Vicky, you seem to have some kind of an obsession about this telephone. I won't telephone at all. I'll go right downtown and call on Carroll and Dr. Marshall in person. It's much more satisfactory. Any other instructions?"

"No," Vicky said, and at last Helen left.

"PLEASE repeat that call of mine to New York, as quickly as possible," Vicky said to long distance. It would have been simpler to repeat Gennery's name and number at the start, but finally he was on the wire.

"Gennery! Dolly Tillinghast is in New York. If you see him promise me that you won't say a word about my having written anything."

"Oh, Vicky, you're crazy," Gennery grunted.

"Gennery, he's the very person who mustn't know. He's the person for whose benefit I'm doing all this. Promise me you won't tell him a word. I'm almost mad with worry."

"All right."

"No, say it."

"I promise I will not say a word regarding this fool business to Dol' Tillinghast. Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes, bless you."

"And don't call me up again. I haven't done a stroke of work today because of you."

"I'm sorry," Vicky said.

"Good-by."

She remembered too late another thing she had intended to ask. It was exactly what was in the coffin. Whether it was just weights, or a dummy, or what Vicky referred to, even to herself in a kind of horrified euphuism, as "the real thing."

It speaks volumes for Gennery's character that Vicky did not put in another call. Knowledge would have added to her comfort, but it was not essential as she planned things. She regretted her obedience, however, when Helen came back with a report of her activities.

"I think I've arranged everything so that it will go off beautifully," she said. "I went to Carroll. After all chairs are so important."

"Well, if there's any difficulty about Mr. Carroll's," Vicky said, "I'm sure from what Edith Viereck said that she'd be only too glad to crawl about during the services camouflaged as an entire set. She des' loves to help. Did you tell Carroll the coffin wasn't to be opened?"

"I mentioned it to him, but he agrees with me that that would be a great mistake. He says things may have gotten disarranged."

"Nothing will have been disarranged which will matter by Judgment Day," Vicky replied. "And I have made up my mind on the subject."

"You'd better lie down again, darling," Helen advised. "I don't think you're up to attending to all these details."

"I will rest some more now," Vicky agreed, "but I will be downstairs when it arrives. And I will see that my wishes are carried out."

"There are some things on which we have to take the advice of experts," Helen pronounced axiomatically.

It was clear that on this one point Helen was not to be trusted.

Vicky went back to her book. She hadn't read so much in months as in the last two days. She did not have the time until seven entirely to herself however. About half past five Helen announced that Nat Lee was downstairs

demanding an interview, and wouldn't take no for an answer.

"Nat Lee!"

What in the world could Zona's husband want?

"Yes, he seems perfectly frantic."

Nat Lee was ordinarily the mildest of pink young men but he entered Vicky's dressing-room with the expression of a baby having a colic pain.

"I just got back in town," he said, "and heard that you're having him shipped on."

"Yes, they're sending him," Vicky said.

"Can you have it stopped?"

"Of course I can't. It arrives on the seven o'clock. It must have left Albany by now. What an extraordinary question!"



"They both of them have played big time," said Mr. Weber. "They're a pair of headliners"

"I suppose there's nothing to do about it then?"

Nat began pacing up and down with an absurd look of a baby walking the floor with itself.

"About what?" Vicky asked.

"Nothing. Only I think it's an awful mistake. I'm in touch with the District Attorney's office and I know how they watch such things."

"What things?" Vicky herself was almost frantic now.

"Maybe it will come out all right."

"But, Nat, what did you mean? What do you know?"

She could extract nothing from him. Seeming scarcely to hear her demands for an explanation, he went away.

THE District Attorney's office! Could there be more alarming words to a person engaged in the most oblique procedure possible?

Did it mean that they'd found she'd never been married?

Somehow Nat's manner didn't suggest that. As a matter of fact it suggested nothing actual but all sorts of unspeakable unpleasantness to come.

Vicky didn't read any more. She sat holding the arms of her chaise longue, telling herself she was a fool to be so frightened when she knew of nothing definite to fear. Gennery Bond might be a

grumpy old thing, but one could certainly rely on him not to do anything which would get one into terrible trouble.

Gennery was unquestionably grumpy at times. He had been particularly grumpy that morning at a quarter of eight when Dolly Tillinghast pounded on his bedroom door and woke him up.

"What in the devil are you doing here?" he had inquired.

"I just got off the midnight. I've come up to have breakfast with you."

"Why couldn't you have eaten it at the station and let me have my sleep?"

"I felt the need of a radiant face across the table."

got to get up there with a good psychiatrist and I've got to get up there today."

"You're off on the wrong foot, old egg," Dolly told him.

"The deuce I am! If you think poor little Vicky hasn't toppled over the edge of insanity just read that letter. Oh, the devil! Why didn't she come to me and talk things over?"

Dolly read the letter and chuckled.

"That's what I thought it would be," he remarked.

"Well, I'm glad you think it's funny."

"You bet I think it's funny. Now come right out of the laboratory, Gen.

There's not a crazy hair in Vicky's head."

"And she's written that letter!" Gennery roared at him.

"Vicky knows what she's about all right and this is just a desperate means toward succeeding."

"You mean to say she's got a sane motive?"

"Sane as women's motives go. Vicky's gentle little purpose is to break my spirit."

"Why?"

"Because I happened to guess that her marriage story was a bluff and laughed at her for it. She almost burst a blood vessel. Now she's going to prove to me that it was true or die in the attempt."

Gennery looked both bored and disgusted.

"Oh, it's sex nonsense, is it?" he said. That took it out of his province. "Well, you needn't have come way down here to warn me not to help her."

"She's a desperate woman, Gen," Dolly said. "I for one could never respect you again if you resisted an appeal like that."

"What do you mean?"

"Just that I, in my turn, would like to break Vicky's spirit a little."

"Whew! You're ambitious."

"And I've got a plan for doing it which involves your complying with Vicky's request."

"It can't be done, Dol. For one thing I haven't an idea where I'd lay my hands on what she asks for."

"I'll take care of that."

"And for another there aren't only you two to be considered. There's the whole of Chatfield that will talk like a tree full of magpies."

CHATFIELD can't talk any more than it's talking now," Dolly said, "and in fact the only way I can see to put a final end to a lot of the conversation is a funeral, only I want it to be a slightly different funeral."

"Meaning?"

"Well, I've had several ideas, but to see whether I can work the best one I want you to come with me, as soon as we've finished breakfast, to an address I've found in this instructive little volume."

Dolly patted the Red Book Directory.

"I've got a busy day ahead of me," Gennery began.

"You're not too busy for this," Dolly informed him. "You're not a completely dried up old fossil yet, though you give a pretty good imitation of one. This is going to be a circus."

"All right, I'll give you an hour," Gennery growled.

"Good. I honestly need your advice. I suppose you don't keep an unused coffin any place around here, or at your office, convenient as it would be for your practice?"

"No," Gennery replied. "So far I've been able to (Continued on page 51)

LET IT "WRITE ITS OWN TICKET"



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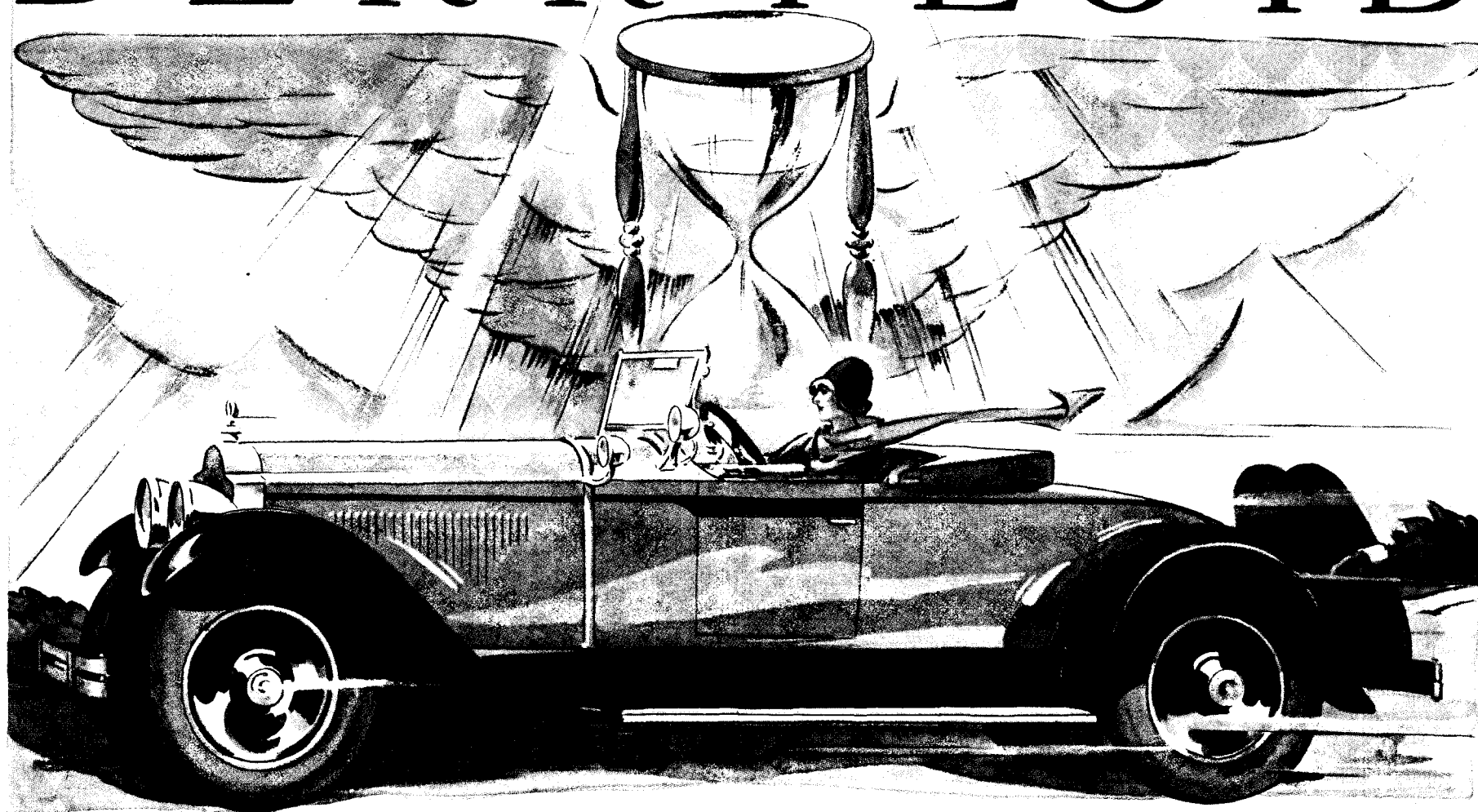


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Songs for the Stump

Continued from page 16

And we'll inform a cop.
Joys that you take in that disguise
Are stronger far than pop.
The Volstead Act is still a fact—
Remember that, Al Smi-hi-hith.
If you forget we'll vote for Walsh
Or even Mer-e-dith.

WET CANDIDATES (disguised as Bacchantes or Pan with hair pantsies. Senator Reed in the garb of Gambrinus, playing he's vinous, carries a keg. Governor Ritchie, pretending he's twitchy, robed as E. Nero, dissolute hero, shakes a mean leg):

We'll rally round the jag, boys,
We'll rally once again,
Scorning the battle cry of Teadom.
We'll gather round the Bourbon
And genu-wine champagne,
Shouting the bottle cry of Freedom.
Up with the taproom,
Down with the bar!
Hurrah for High License!
And so, there you are.
We'll rally round the jag, boys,
We'll rally once again,
Shouting the bottle cry of Freedom!

GOVERNOR RITCHIE
Though my habits are rather abstemious,
For personal freedom I'm hot.

SENATOR REED
I'd think it was rather blasphem-i-ous
If I should be labeled as not.

BOTH
As our bodies depend on their tissues,
So candidates have to have issues.

(A motorcycle whistles in. Still is the sweet but clamorous din. Drums ruffle and a trumpet blares. A stylish figure doth dismount in What the Well-Dressed Bridegroom Wears.)

GROVER A. WHALEN (for, you see, 'tis nothing less than him or he):
I, who am His Elegance
Official Greeter of New York;
I who said "Shake" to the Prince of Wales
And introduced Queen Marie to literary circles.

I who rescued Ruth Elder from the Municipal Tugboat
And know, by Heaven, the Olympian Telephone Directory,
Announce that the greatest of the Smiths
Hath been discovered Somewhere
Calling down eleven lawyers and five judges

Concerned in the Mysterious Case of Mrs. Knapp.

So now he comes!!
(Thunder and lightning.)

To meet you, greet you—
No fear, ladies, he won't eat you.

(A car whoops in with bound and leap. Inside it Mr. Smith sits scolding. The State Supreme Court's sound asleep, after the session they've been holding. Amidst the shout the Gov. steps out, alert and keen and pert and clean.)

GROVER A. WHALEN (presents the mitt with gesture fit):
Greeting, O Smith! And if it please—

GOVERNOR SMITH
Cut out the speech, Demosthenes.
(Looks at his watch, turns back the minute hand a notch.)
Somehow my watch is always fast.
Constituents, I'm more than happy
To face this demonstration vast—
But I must make it rather snappy.
At one I lunch with quite a bunch
Of good Rotarians
To make a speech by which to reach
The poor agrarians.
The State Librarians
I met at three.
It's up to me
To sit till six with nine committees
From several important cities.
Then Bank Examiners I'll review
Till one A. M. or maybe two.
Then chat with various commissions—
And some, I fear, are politicians.
Excuse my dust,
For go I must.
I'll have five minutes open soon—

Wednesday at three or Friday noon—
When we can speak of this and that
And have another nice long chat.

ALL
A nice long chat. Oh, think of that!

BIG CHIEF OLVANY
But what's your Platform, noble sire?

GOVERNOR SMITH
'Tis this—just write it on your tire:
A truckman works from sun to sun—
A statesman's work is never done.

WETS (brightly, lightly)
He's ours, you bet.

DRYS (sourly, dourly)
He sounds all wet.

GOVERNOR SMITH (mounting his car, lights a cigar):
Say au revoir
But not good-by.

(Like café noir, spilled from the sky, Senator Heflin, hatred-wracked, comes cussing down in tattered gown to do the Mad Ophelia act.)

HEFLIN
Hoo-garoo!
Your goldarned sly religious taint
You try to mix with politix.
You think you're smart, but then you ain't.

We'll match you,
Catch you,
Scratch you.
With eyes, eyes, eyes, spies, spies, spies,
We'll follow you round till you're on edge.

GOVERNOR SMITH
My friend, is that a campaign pledge?
(Senator Heflin—rousing cheers—swallows himself and disappears. The Governor orders, "Drive on, Jake." His driver eases off the brake, more hostile gates to crash 'em. Admiring hail him cry on cry, save here and there an ancient Dry removes his teeth to gnash 'em.)

(The Ghost, upon his old white nag, all daubed with red Virginia mud, up canters with a thud-thud-thud. None in the Democratic throng notice him when he comes along save two Important Public Men, who whisper, "Gosh, he's here again!")

GHOST

I'm dizzy.
Where izzee?

BAINBRIDGE COLBY

See yon cigar in yonder car?

GHOST

By History! I'll overtake him
And by his honest hand I'll shake him.
I've chased him up, I've chased him down,
I've haunted him around the town—

SENATOR WALSH: Who are you, Ghost?
GHOST: Oh, just a writer.

COLBY
Indeed! Then I must talk politer.
That's rather fine.
Now what's your line?
History, fiction, evolution—

GHOST
I'm author of the Constitution.
(A pallid glim falls over him.)
Another document I wrote
Which makes me yearn
Earthward to turn
And give Al Smith my honest vote;
This was my Statute, sternly framed—
Religious Liberty 'twas named.

SENATOR WALSH
Either I'm blind or dumb or deaf
Or that's the ghost of Thomas Jeff.
(To Heflin) Did you see it, Heff?

SENATOR HEFLIN
What if I didn't and what if I did?
Jefferson ain't my line.
He may have found the Party, kid,
But he ain't no founder of mine.

(By now the spook has galloped far after the gubernatorial car. Perhaps he's caught it, but I'll bet he's half a mile behind it yet.) CURTAIN

How would you play it?

This Auction Bridge hand is a continuation of the series that has been appearing each week in Collier's

North

- ♠ 10-7-4
- ♥ 8-6
- ♦ A-10-7-5-2
- ♣ A-5-3

West

- ♠ Q-8-3
- ♥ J-9-7-4-2
- ♦ 6-3
- ♣ J-8-4

East

- ♠ 9-6-5-2
- ♥ A-Q-3
- ♦ K-8
- ♣ 9-7-6-2

South

- ♠ A-K-J
- ♥ K-10-5
- ♦ Q-J-9-4
- ♣ K-Q-10

THE bidding in this hand does not call for extended comment. South, with an ideal No Trump distribution and four suits all thoroughly stopped, of course bids No Trump. Passes by West and East are obvious, and pass by North should appear equally so. I say *should* appear because an absurd idea is more or less prevalent in the country to the effect that it is the duty of the partner of a No Trumper to take him out under any circumstances. No policy could be more unsound; No Trump is bid to be played and, at a love score, should not be taken out with Minor strength unless that strength is unusually great, in which case three of the Minor should be bid.

The Play

WEST'S opening lead against the No Trump was of course from her longest suit, Hearts; she led her fourth best, and the thoughtless play of East would have been the Ace of Hearts. A finesse generally is made with the hope of catching a card in the adverse hand on the right. When Dummy is without a high card, the object that generally accompanies the finesse is lacking and, as a rule, it should not be made. In this case, however, East can see that a finesse against nothing should be made. Noting the high cards in her own hand and Dummy, she could consider it probable—although not absolutely assured—that the King of Hearts (the suit led by East) was held by the Closed Hand. It was also sure that the Closed Hand had at least three Hearts, so that the King was not a singleton and could not be captured by the play of the Ace. East knew that South had at least three Hearts because West's original lead—the Four (West's fourth best)—showed that West held three cards higher than the Four and possibly one lower. East had the Trey, so the only card lower than the Four

which West could have would be the Deuce. Consequently West could not have more than five Hearts; and with two in the Dummy and three in the East hand, South must have at least three. Of course West may have opened from a four-card suit and South may have the Deuce; but there is a good chance that West's suit is a five-carder. If East should take the first Heart trick with the Ace and then lead the Queen, South probably will hold up her King until the third round; and with that happening, if East should win with her King of Diamonds, East would not have a Heart to lead to her partner. East cannot tell that West has no re-entry, but there is quite a reasonable chance that she has not. If West has the King of Hearts, the play of the Queen by East on trick 1 would capture that trick and East then would lead the Ace and follow with a small Heart; but if South has the King of Hearts the play of the Queen by West will make South think that the original lead has been from A-J and that her only chance to cash her King is on this trick. Therefore East has everything to gain and nothing to lose by playing the Queen instead of the Ace of Hearts on trick 1. South, winning this trick with the King, can count that, in addition to the one Heart trick she has won, she is sure of three Clubs, two Spades and one Diamond. To make game two more tricks are needed, and they can easily be obtained if the Diamond finesse succeeds, so it is clearly South's duty to try that finesse at trick 2. When it loses, East, to trick 3, leads the Ace of Hearts; and to trick 4 a small Heart, so East and West win four Heart tricks and one Diamond and save the game by East's finesse against nothing—generally an inexcusable play.

Next week's hand is given below; make up your mind how you would bid and play it before you read next week's description.

| North | South |
|--------------|--------------|
| S. A-K-J-9-5 | S. 10-2 |
| H. 10-6 | H. A-K-J |
| D. 6-4 | D. K-J-7-2 |
| C. 8-7-3-2 | C. A-9-5-4 |
| East | West |
| S. Q-4 | S. 8-7-6-3 |
| H. 8-7-3 | H. Q-9-5-4-2 |
| D. 10-8-5-3 | D. A-Q-9 |
| C. K-Q-10-6 | C. J |