

The Innocent Cheat

by Ruth Dewey Groves
AUTHOR OF "RICH GIRL - POOR GIRL," ETC.

CHAPTER XLIV (Continued)
She struggled to turn her thoughts away from such a fate and fasten them upon Bob. Bob! It was even greater torture to dwell upon him. Just when they had ended their foolish quarrel—when happiness unbelievably sweet had come to them—this!

Until that moment, when the full import of what had befallen her swept over Helen, she had not guessed how cruel are some of the tricks of Fate.

Mrs. Wethering came to ask her where she would have her luncheon served, as it was Helen's habit to take it in any place that suited her mood.

She was denied entrance. But Helen was fast becoming an enigma to her, beginning with Helen's association with Eva Ennis, so she asked her question through the door and went away without protest when Helen answered that she did not want any lunch.

In the afternoon Helen went out. Mrs. Wethering saw her walking toward the lake. When the time grew past the dinner hour and she had not returned the housekeeper became alarmed and went into conference with Ashe about it.

"I'm afraid," she said, "that something has happened to Miss Nellin."

CHAPTER XLV
HELEN was found sitting beside the lake, chilled but indifferent to her discomfort. In the darkness she seemed a part of the rustic bench on which she sat, so still was she.

Ashe spoke to her in a low-pitched voice, impressed with a sense of tragic unhappiness in her attitude.

She answered quietly that she would not have dinner—they need not keep it waiting for her.

"But might I suggest, miss, that the air is growing chilly?" Ashe said uneasily.

Helen stirred and looked about her, noticing for the first time that daylight had completely gone and a mist was hanging over the shore of the lake. She shivered slightly, got up and walked up the path to the house.

She went to her room and refused Mrs. Wethering's frequently repeated offer to bring her a tray. Presently she locked her door, but a little later the housekeeper was obliged to disturb her again.

"Mr. Ennis is here," she announced, raising her voice to make certain that Helen could hear her. "He insists upon knowing how you are. I have told him that you are indisposed, but he begs to see you if you aren't too ill to come down stairs."

For a while no answer came, then a voice that Mrs. Wethering scarcely recognized as Helen's told her to send Bob away. "I can't see him," Helen added with a note of ferocity.

Mrs. Wethering concluded that they had quarreled and she was not at all averse to carrying Helen's decision to the young man who waited below in a fever of impatience to be with his sweetheart.

"But I must know that she isn't seriously ill," he protested.

"She is tired," Mrs. Wethering answered stiffly, "and does not wish to be disturbed."

She did not mean to be rude, but Bob sensed the rebuff behind her words and it brought the first doubt of Helen's reason for not seeing him. Perhaps she wasn't ill, after all, and her housekeeper knew she was making excuses.

"Will you carry up a written message to her?" he asked huskily.

Mrs. Wethering could not refuse.

Bob took a notebook from his pocket, wrote a few words hurriedly on a leaf, tore it out and gave it to the woman, folded over.

A MOMENT later Helen took it from her through a crack in the door. She read it through tears. "Unless you are too ill to come down, Helen, please see me," it said.

Helen swayed, against the door, closing it, and Mrs. Wethering heard her say, "Oh, I can't, I can't."

"Miss Nellin! What is it? What's wrong?"

"Tell him to go away! Tell him I can't come down!"

Mrs. Wethering repeated this message to Bob in no uncertain terms and he was obliged to accept it as final. He left the house in a bewildered state of mind.

What could have happened? Had Helen repented their reconciliation so soon after vowing that nothing could part them again? It was unbelievable?

But illness need not have prevented her from sending him a word telling him when to return—unless her condition was far more serious than Mrs. Wethering had admitted.

The thought drove him to beg his mother, when he reached home, to telephone Bramblewood and inquire about Helen.

Word came back that she was sleeping. No, there was nothing to worry over—just a slight indisposition.

"Drive as fast as you dare," she directed the man at the wheel when she was ready to start. He nodded, and muttered "Yes'm." But a word from Mrs. Wethering, that Helen had not heard, frustrated her wish for speed.

He drove at a pace that brought a command to "go faster," as frequently as traffic regulations compelled him to idle the motor. Helen grew exasperated with him, but decided that he was timid and ceased to urge him on.

She was fearful that Brent might have breakfasted and gone before she could reach his apartment, and it was with tremendous relief that she at last arrived there.

The temptation to stop on the way and telephone him had come to her. She felt it as a temptation because it was something she did not want to do, believing, as she did, that it would put Brent on his guard.

Though just what she expected to gain by surprising him was not quite clear to her. Perhaps, had she analyzed it, she might have found that it was a desire to attack, to maneuver for a crisis that would end her unendurable suspense.

She did not have herself announced on this occasion. If Brent was in she would see him—if he had gone out she would wait until he returned even though it might not be for hours, night perhaps.

At Brent's door she rang the bell with a firm pressure on the button. Inside there was a startled movement on the part of an occupant of the colorful divan, a sudden half-rising and a sinking, that was almost a collapse, back again.

Eyes fastened upon the door as the Japanese servant went to answer the summons that had sounded a second time. There was a smothered exclamation as Helen stepped into the foyer of the apartment and asked for Mr. Brent.

(To Be Continued)

THE RETURN OF TARZAN



And he must believe it. What else was there for him to believe? Oh, why hadn't she instructed Mrs. Wethering and Ashe to say she was not at home? That would have given her time to find a way to trap Bob less callously.

Too late to think of it now... but surely there was something she could do... something besides

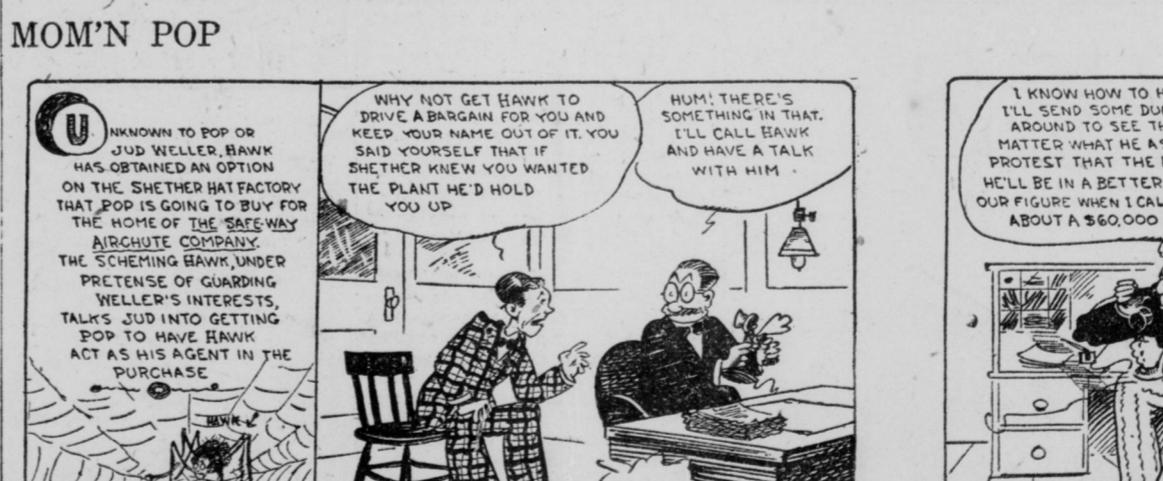
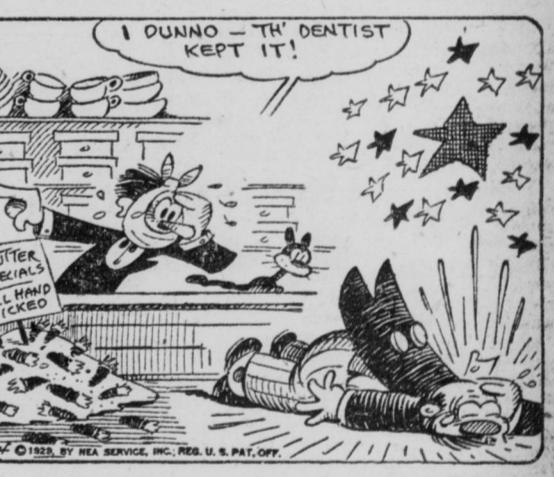
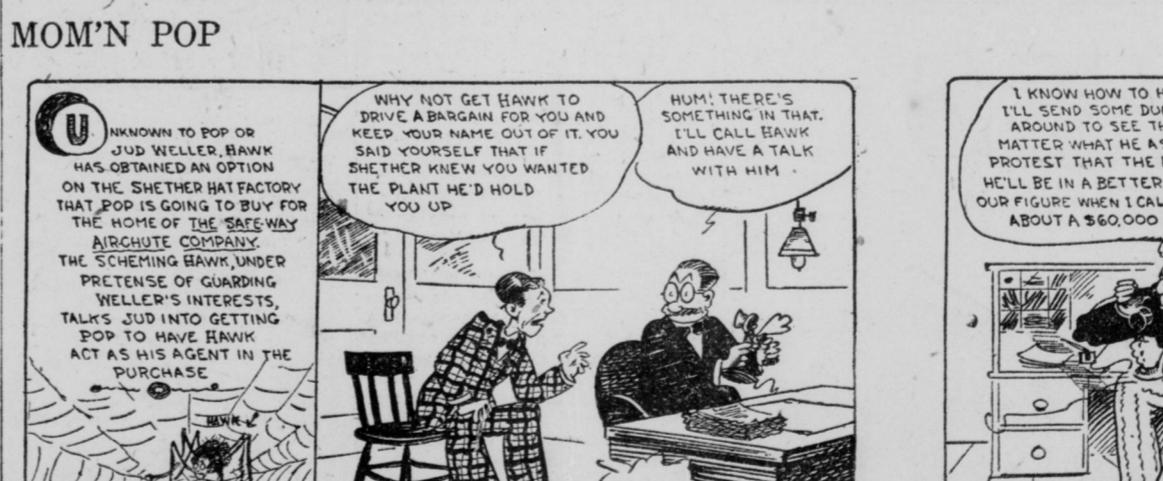
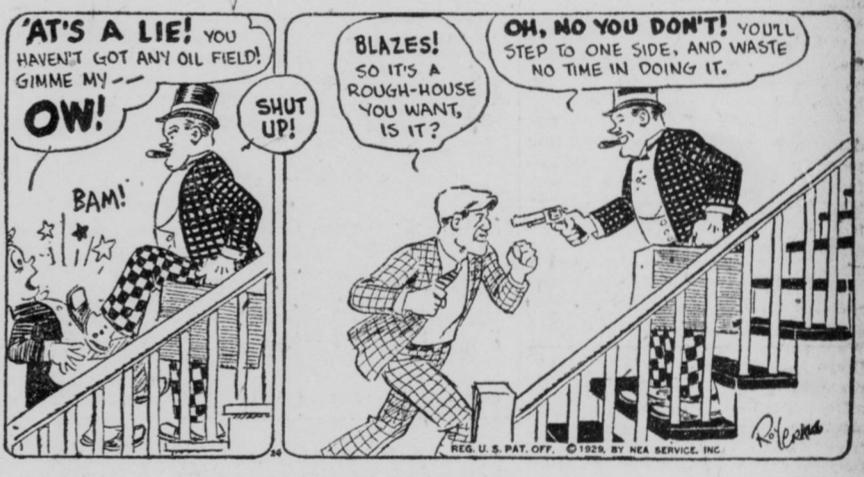
Tarzan followed close upon the warrior, waiting for a clearer space in which to hurl his rope. Suddenly he caught a fleeting glimpse of a tawny hide worming its way through the matted jungle grass. It was Numa, the lion. He, too, was stalking the black man. Instantly Tarzan realized the native's danger.

Now Tarzan's attitude toward his erstwhile prey changed completely. Here was a fellow man threatened by a common enemy. Like a flash, things happened. The lion sprang from a bush... Tarzan shouted a warning, and the warrior turned just in time to see Numa halted in mid-air flight by a slender rope.

The noose stopped the beast, but the strain overbalanced Tarzan. He came tumbling to the ground. The lion turned upon him. Defeless, Tarzan of the Apes was nearer death than instant than ever before! It was the black man who saved him. His spear arm flew back, then shot forward. A poisoned spear-head transfixed Numa's sleek hide.

Hidously raging, the brute turned again upon the black, but Tarzan's rope again caught him. Swiftly the ape-man ran thrice around a giant tree, binding Numa fast. Next his giant arm encircled that roaring throat. A long blade sank into its fierce heart. Across the body of their kill, the white man and the black made signs of peace and friendship.

SALESMAN SAM



—By Edgar Rice Burroughs