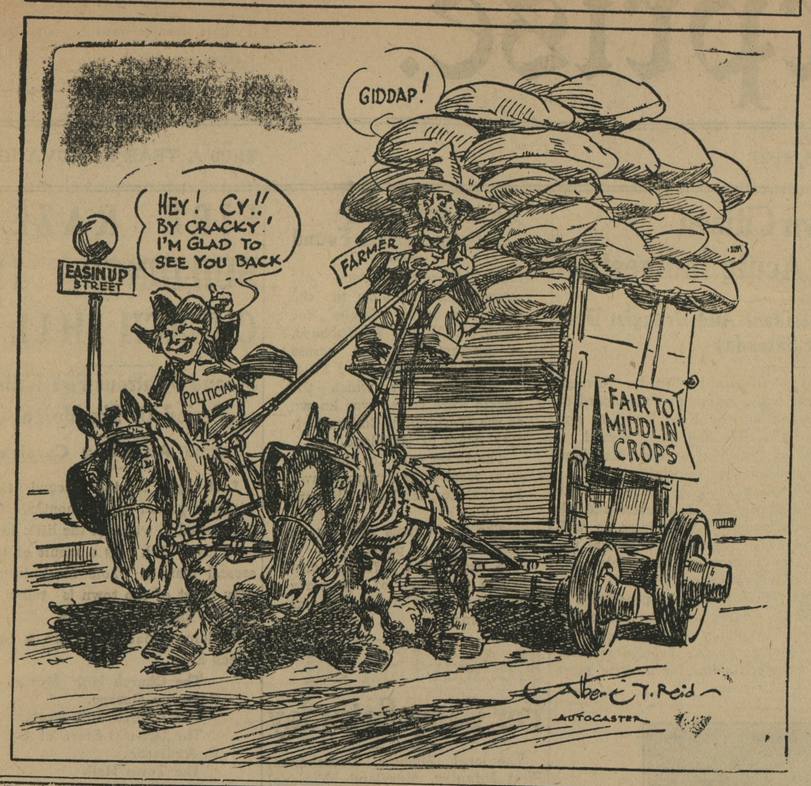
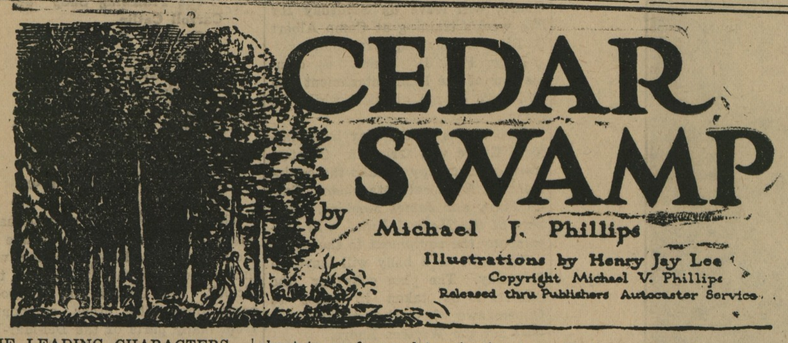
You Just Know He's Glad — *By Albert T. Reid*





THE LEADING CHARACTERS

EDISON FORBES, a young resident of Scottdale, goes on a little joy ride with another young fellow. Some liquor is consumed. They are stopped suddenly by the sight of a booze truck driven by

SCOOTS LIBBEY, a worthless character, who has smashed his machine into another car, killing its lone occupant, a woman. Forbes' companion and Libbey quit the scene hurriedly, leaving the former alone to face a constable who reasons that Eddie, with the scent of whiskey about him, must be connected in some way, with the accident. Accordingly, Forbes is arrested.

CHAPTER III

A DOUBTING WIFE

It was his own wife, Patsy Jane Forbes, who first gave expression in his hearing to the doubt of Edison's story—a doubt which hung over the community like miasma from a swamp in the succeeding days. Scoots Libbey was not captured the night of the tragedy. He slipped through the telephone dragnet. No one had seen him; nor was trace of him found thereafter.

Edison spent the night in the county jail. He was formally charged, next morning, with manslaughter for causing the death of Mrs. Maria Knowles, the collision victim. Bail was arranged and he was released. He stopped at the ice and coal office of Sam Hilton, where he was employed as office manager, to explain his tardiness before going on home.

He found that news of his arrest was before him. Hilton, a grim, narrow-faced man of sixty, prayed at each Wednesday evening's prayer-meeting for the confusion of booze and its supporters. He felt, to bolster up his prayers with what he considered good works, that he must discharge Forbes. And he did so.

Forbes went on home. In the little white-painted house which they rented on Scottdale's second-best street, Patsy Jane cried over her husband and petted him. The jail breakfast had not been palatable; she made coffee and cooked eggs and bacon. With the boyish smile and frank simplicity which were his chiefest charms, Eddie told her the story of the previous evening.

"Now you go ahead and walk over me, Pat," he concluded. "For I certainly deserve it. I've acted like a fool and I've lost my job, all on account of a bottle of hootch. But before you start I want to tell you that I'm done. through, completed, finis! No more booze for mine. I'm off the stuff for life. When I saw what it did last night it opened my eyes, I can tell you. Oh, I know I've said all this before. But this time I mean it. I'm done; that's all."

"You didn't say who was with you, Eddie," was her comment.

"No, I didn't, Pat," he replied. "I'm not going to tell anyone."

She looked at him in surprise. "But at the trial you'll have to, won't you?"

"Not if I don't want to; and I don't."

"But why?"

"Well, it's like this," he began shame faced and flushing. He was about to confess a determination to do a generaus thing, and it embarrassed him. "The fellow who was with me wasn't one of my particular cronies, Pat. He has a good job. He doesn't take a drink once in six months.

"I didn't intend to go to Burley last night. I was headed home after getting a balance on the month's business. But there was a smell of spring in the air. It was moonlight. I was tired out; I've been working extra hard for six or eight weeks. This fellow drove along and the idea popped into my head from nowhere to go hunt a drink. When he offered me a lift I put it up to him. He——, well, he sort of acted on impulse the way I did. The first thing we knew, we were on our way to Burley."

"I know, Eddie." The wife shook with tender impatience the hand which she was fondling. "But he's free, white and twenty-one, isn't he? He's able to bear his share of the responsibility, isn't he? Why, you may have to go to jail unless you tell. Or he does."

He smiled tolerantly. "Oh, no, I won't. But he must come forward of his own accord. He has a good job; he stands high here. It would be awfully hard on his people. And really, I'm to blame——"

Patsy Jane let go his hand. "Oh, indeed!" she commented coldly. "He does stand high, does he? And of course your being under arrest and losing your job isn't hard on me! You owe something at home, don't you?"

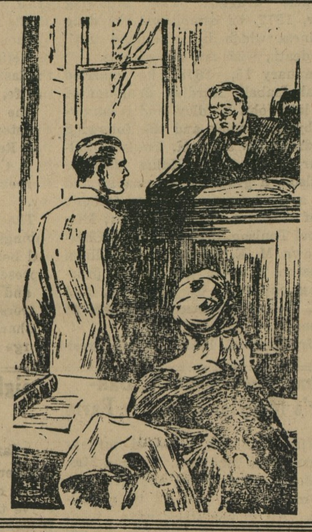
But he shook his head stubbornly. "I can't do it. Pat. I've thought it all over. In a way I'm responsible for that woman's death. If I hadn't persuaded Tibbey to break into a case at Burley, he might have not gotten drunk, don't you see? And if, when this chap offered me a ride, I had asked him to take me home, he would have done it. That's all there would have been to it. But I didn't. It's like pushing over a line of dominoes. I gave the shove, and it's up to me to stand the gaff alone."

"Unless, of course, he offers to help. That'll be different."

He could feel her stiffening with resentment, and something else. She rose and began clearing away the dishes. "It—it almost l ooks as though there might have been something dishonorable," she murmured.

He knew what she meant, and flushed. They had been married only a year. Previous to her coming to Scottdale with her father and step mother to reside, he had been tacily engaged to Nance Encell, daughter of the town's richest man. But Nance was headstrong and high-spirited. They quarreled frequently and violently. After one of the quarrels he met, fell in love with Patsy Jane and married her, all within the space of three months.

Nance was one of the first to call after they were settled in the little white house. There was a good-humored air of "let bygones be bygones" on the surface, but, seemingly a lurking imp of malice beneath. She showed open favor for her old sweetheart at parties and dances.



In a scathing arraignment that lasted for 20 minutes, Judge Randolph Parsons sentenced Edison Forbes to from five to fifteen years in the state penitentiary at Jackson.

She came and went as she pleased. She had her own car. Its powerful motor was frequently heard roaring at unconventional hours along Scottdales' quiet streets. It might look, thought Eddie, moodily, after he had kissed his wife goodbye and started downtown, that he had been out riding with Nance last night and was concealing the fact. Well, if Patsy Jane was silly enough to believe that, let her. He would keep silent as to who his companion was. That was the only square, decent thing to do.

Of course, if that companion chose to come forward voluntarily, the complications would be smoothed out

He had left the block in which his home was situated when he met a small boy on a bicycle. The boy dismounted, handed him a plain white envelope on which was typewritten only Forbes' name. and rode off again. He tore it open curiously. There was a half sheet of paper inside. There were a few words, also in typewriting, upon it. He read:

"For God's sake, Eddie, stand by me. If you tell about last night I will be disgraced. It will break my people's hearts." There was neither salutation nor signature.

He tore the note into small pieces as he walked along and allowed them to sift into the new grass. He was contemptous, but the appeal strengthened his determination to protect the weak youth. "If I don't do it, he'll just about go to the dogs," thought Eddie.

CHAPTER IV

"GUILTY"

For his companion was not of the stuff of which martyrs are fashioned He was easily led, easily oppressed by disapproval. He was of the type whose face registers with hanbdog faithfulnessf rod yas the record of a fw hours' dissipation. "Well, you're a weak sister, kid," he summed up, "which is all the more reason I have to stand by you. If I told, your father would probably kick you out; they'd fire you down at the office, just the way I was fired by old Sam. You'd slink away to the big town and be a bum.

"Oh, I know if I save you this time you'll probably stub your toe sooner or later, anyway. But that's not my affair. I won't be to blame. I have my course mapped out. I must keep the faith, no matter what happens next week or next year. Besides, I really don't need your help. No Jury would convict on such flimsy evidence."

He was curiously mistaken in this. He failed to take into consideration many elements which combined to work against him with what appeared to be personal malignancy. Mrs. Knowles, the woman who had been crushed to death, was admired and respected in the community. Her life had been a long struggle against odds, which she had overcome with noteworthy patience and industry.

It has been suspected for some time that Scottdale was on the main booze route between Canadian ports and Detroit and Chicago. Furthermore, there were hints that peace officers were being subsidized to look the other way whn the trucks slipped through in the night. This was keenly resented. The town had been dry for years bfore the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, and the numerous violations had aroused pub lic sentiment.

Eddie Forbes had been popular. But now that he was under arrest for a mishap due to liquor, it was recalled that he had been drunk with more or less frequency in the past. Repudiation by his employer, a man of influence, had done much to turn the community against him.

The trial overwhelmed him like a landslide. The prosecution produced witnesses to prove that he had been seen sitting alone on the truck on the main street of Burley, less than two hours before the accident. This was while Scoots Libbey conducted the wretchedly ill Barney Olk to the Burley House, a short distance away. But Barney had entered the hotel alone. Hearing of the accident, he disappeared next morning before he could be questioned.

No one had noticed Forbes' companion and the latter's car on the expedition to Burley. This was because Eddie had left them on a side street while he skirmished the liquor. Nothing could be found to substantiate his story that the missing Scoots was responsible for the accident. There was little to connect Libbey with the truck. There was a Mackinaw coat on the driver's seat. In one of the pockets was a partly-emptied bottle of liquor. The cargo was intact except for one case which had been opened, and from which two bottles had been taken.

The prosecution argued that Barney Olk was the driver and sole attendant. That he had broken into the case and abstracted the bottle which was found in the Mackinaw. That the coat belonged to him. That he had become sick by reason of overindulgence and stayed at Burley. And that Forbes had volunteered to take the truck on to its destination. The next stop in the hypothesis was that Eddie had also helped himself to the liquor bewteen Burley and Scottdale. That he had become drunk he could not manage the truck, and the accident had followed.

Eddie was on the stand in his own defense. But he did not help his case. He told his story strictly in accordance with the truth. He steadfastedly refused to give any hint of the identity of the person with him in the car. The sheriff had tried to prove up by a search for distinguishing tiremarks in the narrow lane leading from the river road to the highway. But as so many cars had followed the route to the accident that no evidence was forthcoming.

Into the minds of the judge, the jury and the spectators seeped the befief that the story he told was, in the main particulars false. They reasoned that the prosecuor's theory must be the correct one. In the cold light of day his Quixotic defense of another, even at the possible expense of his own freedom, did not seem logical.

They went a step further. If, by any chance he was telling the truth he had an unworthy motive and not a worthy one, for keeping the name of his companion a secret. His courtship of Nance Encell was remembered. Their friendliness since his marriage, innocent though it was, had been a subject of comment in town. So—was the next step in their minds—if he wasn't drving the truck, then he was joyriding around with that Encell girl while his poor little wife was at home.

The Judy brought in a verdict of "Guilty." Interpreted, it really meant "Guilty on appearances and general principles." In a scathing arraignment that lasted for 20 minutes, Judge Randolph Parsons sentenced Edison Forbes to from 5 to 15 years in the state penitentiary at Jackson.

Edison made the few hours' trip to the prison city in a daze of misery. The deputy sheriff in whose charge he was, Linus Beal. was a school-time friend. He sympathized deeply with the prisoner and respected his tragic bewilderment. He did not insist on sitting with Edison. He realized that his prisoner preferred to be alone.

The outstanding thought in Edison's mind was that he had been a fool, a crackbrained, overgenerous fool, in protecting one who could not be saved by protection. And one who did not appreciate his sacrifice. The cowardly note the morning after the accident proved that. So did the young man's avoidance of him since his arrest. His thoughts ran: "If I'd have known they'd convict me, I would have told who was with me."

The train puffed into Jackson. Beal signaled a taxicab. They were driven to the prison whose sinister walls towered above the railway tracks. Edison shuddered as they passed within the gateway of discolored gray stone. The whole place seemed to recover slowly from the recent siege of wet weather. There were puddles in the worn flags of the foot walk. The ivy dripped as it clung to the cold stone barriers. There was the same cold dampness in the prison office, and a strong smell of disinfectant's both depressing and degrading.

Linus received a receipt for his prisoner and went away after a silent handclasp His mouth twitched with emotion, so that he dared attempt no word. The clerk in charge had barely started on Edison's pedigree when the warden entered.

"Never mind, Jerry," he said to the clerk. And then to Edison: "You're Forbes of Scottdale?"

"Yes, sir."

Continued Next Week

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Arthur: "Yes, that's what the pawnbroker told me when I tried to raise something on it."

Aunt: "So you have learned a new piece, dear?"

Niece: "No, it isn't a new piece; the piano has been turned!"

This is the time of year when you can't keep a good thermometer down.

Flip: "I had a perm[illegible]t wave put in my hair while I was on the steamer crossing the Atlantic."

Flop: "An Ocean Wave, eh."

Medico: "Anything happen while I was out?"

Nurse: "Yes, sir; a patient called."

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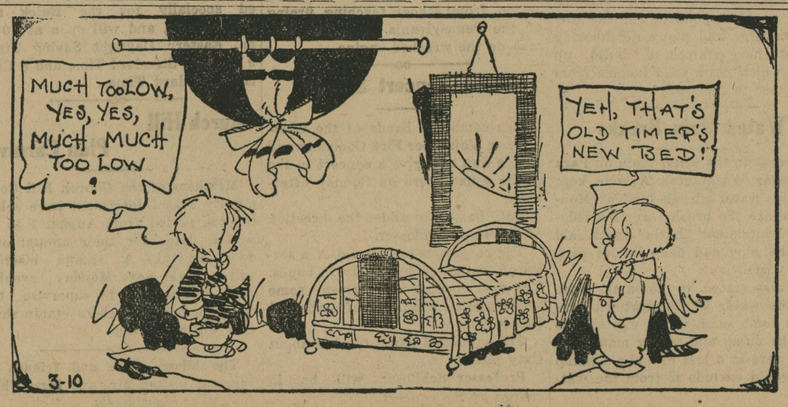

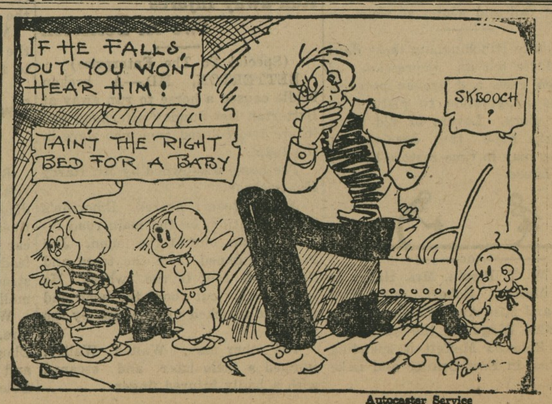

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