

SEVEN KEYS TO BALDPATE

The New Sensational Comedy
With a Laugh in Every Line

By
Earl Derr Biggers

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"Mamma, these gentlemen can't be at all interested." Defiantly she turned the conversation to generalities. Mr. Peters at last seated the winter guests of Baldpate Inn, and opened his luncheon with a soup which he claimed to have wrested from a can. This news drew from Professor Bolton a learned discourse on the tinned aids to the hermit of today. He pictured the seeker for solitude setting out for a desert isle, with canned foods for his body and canned music for his soul. "Robinson Crusoe," he said, "should be rewritten with a can-opener in the leading role." Mrs. Norton gave the talk a more practical turn by bringing up the topic of pomatane poisoning. While the conversation drifted on, Mr. Magee pondered in silence the weird mesh in which he had become involved. What did it all mean? What brought these people to Baldpate in Christmas week? His eyes sought the great safe back of the desk, and stayed there a long time. In that safe, he was sure, lay the answer to this preposterous riddle. When his thoughts came back to the table, he found Mr. Bland eyeing him narrowly. There was a troubling look on the haberdasher's

lean face that could never be ascribed to the cruelty of Arabella. The luncheon over, Miss Norton and her mother prepared to ascend to their rooms. Mr. Magee manoeuvred so as to meet the girl at the foot of the stairs.

"Won't you come back," he whispered softly, "and explain things to a poor hermit who is completely at sea?" "What things?" she asked. "What it all means," he whispered. "Why you went in the station, why you invented the story of the actress, why you came here to brighten my drab exile—what this whole comedy of Baldpate Inn amounts to, anyhow? I assure you I am as innocent of understanding it as is the Czarevitch of Russia on his golden throne."

"You can hardly expect me to credit that," she said. "I must go up now and read mamma into the pleasant land of thin girlish figures that is her afternoon sleaze. I may come back and talk to you after a while, but I don't promise to explain."

"Come back," pleaded Mr. Magee. "That is all I ask."

"A tiny boon," she smiled. "I grant it."

She followed the generous figure of the other woman up the stairs, and casting back a dazzling smile from the landing, disappeared. Mr. Magee turned to find Professor Bolton discoursing to Mr. Bland on some aspects of the Pagan Renaissance. Mr. Bland's face was pained.

"That's great stuff, Professor," he said,

"and usually I'd like it. But just now—I don't seem to be in the mood for it."

"Certainly," sighed the professor. Mr. Bland slouched into the depths of his chair. Professor Bolton turned his disappointed face ceilingward. Laughing, Mr. Magee sought the solitude of number seven.

"After all, I'm here to work," he told himself. "Alarms and excursions, and blue eyes must not turn me from my task. Let's see—what was my task? A deep, heart-searching novel, a novel devoid of rhabd melodrama. It becomes more difficult every minute here at Baldpate Inn. But that should add more zest to the struggle. I devote the next two hours to thought."

He pulled his chair up before the blazing hearth and gazed into the red depths. But his thought refused to turn to the masterpiece that was to be born of Baldpate. They roamed to far-off Broadway, they strolled with Helen Faulkner—the girl he meant to marry if he ever got round to it—along dignified Fifth avenue. Then joyously they trooped to a far more alluring, more human girl, who pressed a bit of cambric to her face in a railway station, while a ginger-haired agent peeped through the bars. How ridiculously small that bit of cambric had been to hide so much beauty! Soon Mr. Magee's thoughts were climbing Baldpate Mountain, there to wander in a mystic maze of ghostly figures which appeared from the shadows, holding aloft in triumph gigantic keys. Mr. Magee had slept but little the night before. The quick December dusk filled number seven when he awoke with a start.

He remembered that he had asked the girl to come back to the office, and he hated himself to think that probably she had done so, only to find that he was not there. Hastily straightening his tie, and dashing the traces of sleep from his eyes with the aid of cold water, he ran downstairs.

The great bare room was in darkness save for the faint red of the fire. Before the fireplace sat the girl of the station, her hair gleaming with a new splendor in that light. She looked in mock reproval at Mr. Magee.

"For shame," she said, "to be late at the trying place!"

"A thousand pardons," Mr. Magee replied. "I fell asleep and dreamed of a girl who went in a railway station—and she was so altogether charming I could not tear myself away."

"I fear," she laughed, "you are old in the ways of the world."

"A passion for sleep seems to have seized the hermit. The professor has gone to his room for that purpose. And Mr. Bland, his broken heart forgot, slumbers over there."

"Pretty lonesome, isn't it?" Mr. Magee glanced over his shoulder at the silent

room. "I was finding it very busy when you came," she answered. "You see, I have known the Inn when it was gay with summer people, and as I sat here by the fire I pretended I saw the ghosts of a lot of the people I knew flitting about in the dusk."

"The rocking-chair fleet sailed by," she smiled faintly. "We always called them that. Bitter, unkind old women who sat for hour after hour on the verandah, and rocked and gossiped and gossiped and rocked. All the old women in the world seem to gather at the summer hotels. And oh, the cruel mouths the fleet had—just thin lines of mouths—I used to look at them and wonder if any one had ever kissed them."

"The girls' eyes were very large and tender in the firelight."

"And I saw some poor little ghosts weeping in a corner," she went on; "a few that the fleet had run down and sunk in the sea of gossip. A little ghost whose mother had not been all she should have been, and the fleet found it out, and rocked and whispered, and she went away. And a few who were poor—the most terrible of sins—to them the fleet showed no mercy. And a fine proud girl, Myra Thornhill, who was engaged to a man named Kendrick, and who never dared come here again after Kendrick suddenly disappeared, because of whispered dishonors the fleet heaped upon his head."

"What wicked women!" said Magee.

"Yes, He isn't really that, I imagine—sort of a vice, or an assistant, or whatever it is, long ago retired from the navy."

"Every summer he comes here, and the place revolves about him. It's all so funny, I wonder if any other crowd attains such heights of snobbishness as that at a summer resort? It's the admiral this and the admiral that, from the moment he enters



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25c Fluid Magnesia. 15c
25c Electric Oil. 15c
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25c Beecham's Pills. 19c
25c Baby's Own Tablets. 16c
75c Aspirin Tablets. 39c
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the door. Nearly every day the manager of Baldpate has a new picture of the admiral taken and hangs it here in the hotel. I'll show them to you when it's light. There's one over there by the desk, of the admiral and the manager together, and the manager has thrown his arm carelessly over the admiral's shoulder, with "See how well I know him, though—and all over his stupid face. Oh, what smobs they are!"

"And the fleet?" asked Mr. Magee. "Worships! m. They fish all day for a smile from him. They keep track of his golings and comings, and when he is in the card-room playing his silly old game of solitaire, they run down their victims in subdued tones so as not to disturb him."

"What an interesting place," said Mr. Magee. "I must visit Baldpate next summer. Shall I call on you here?" "It's so amusing," she smiled, ignoring the question. "You'll enjoy it. And it isn't all diet and admiral. There's happiness, and romance, and whispering on the stairs. At night, when the lights are all blazing, and the band is playing waltzes in the casino, and somebody is giving a dinner in the grill-room, and the girls sit about in the shadows looking too sweet for words—well, Baldpate Inn is a rather entrancing spot. I remember those nights very often now."

To Be Continued.

SYLVIA PANKHURST WILL NEITHER EAT NOR SLEEP

Is Trying To Force the Prison Authorities To Release Her.

(Canadian Press.)

London, Dec. 15.—Miss Sylvia Pankhurst, the militant suffragette leader, since her incarceration on Dec. 10 has adopted the more drastic methods of adding a "sleep strike" to her "hunger and thirst strike," in order to force the prison authorities to release her.

According to some of her comrades of the suffrage organization she accomplished this by continuing to walk and one of her friends says she expects her release shortly as she must be on the point of collapse.

The police, however, hoped to be kept busy with Miss Sylvia Pankhurst and her mother in jail until after a weekly meeting of the Women's and Political Union.

During the militant tactics last night burning down an empty mansion near Bristol and breaking every window in Richmond police station.

FIGHT PICKPOCKETS

Railways Take Steps to Save Easy Marks From Con Men.

(Canadian Press.)

Chicago, Ill., Dec. 15.—Because of the large number of country folks who become easy victims of pickpockets the Central Passenger Association announced today that beginning Feb. 1 no stop-over privileges will be granted by railroads on home-seekers' tickets. The principal stop-over points on such tickets are Chicago, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Kansas City, St. Paul and Minneapolis.

BLACK HAND VICTIM

Frank Laparo Was Killed as Result of Fierce Feud.

(Canadian Press.)

Pittsburg, Dec. 15.—Frank Laparo died in the hospital at Braddock, Pa., early today, another victim, the police declare, of the black hand feud that has waged in the suburbs for almost a year. The shooting occurred within a few feet of the latest black hand murder three months ago. The gunman, like his predecessor, escaped. Mike Greko, immigrant, who arrived in Sharpsburg, Pa., a few days ago, was greeted by a number of his countrymen at a feast last night.

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Although Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment are sold by druggists and dealers everywhere, a liberal sample of each, with 22-page booklet on the care and treatment of skin and hair, will be sent, post-free, on application to "Cuticura," Dept. 32, Boston, U.S.A.

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OPEN EVENINGS

CELESTIALS PLAN TO OUST YUAN SHI KAI

A Big Meeting at Frisco To Finance Proposed New Revolution.

San Francisco, Dec. 15.—Five hundred members of the Chinese colony here met yesterday to take steps to finance a revolution to oust President Yuan Shi Kai of the Chinese republic from office. The meeting proclaimed that the president was trying to have himself declared Emperor.

Ying Fah Hsieh, of Canton, head of the Chinese National party, and personal representative of Dr. Shun Yat Sen, addressed the meeting.

He declared the life of the republic depended on the removal of Yuan, S. C. Kang Hoo, head of the Progressive party in China, spoke of the necessity for organizing a movement that would take the reins of government from the hands of Yuan Shi Kai.

The envoy of Dr. Sun, accompanied by the leader of the Progressive party, will leave in a few days for Chicago and New York.

M. G. SUTTON DEAD

Was One of England's Most Famous Agriculturists.

(Canadian Press.)

New York, Dec. 15.—A London cable to the Herald says:

Martin J. Sutton, head of the famous seed firm of Reading, underwent an operation in London Sunday and died under the anaesthetic. He was 63 years of age.

Mr. Sutton was one of the best-known agriculturists in England, having been for twenty-three years a member of the council of the Royal Agricultural Society. He was also well known in France, and had received decorations of the Legion of Honor and the Merite Agricole. He was interested in the breeding of live stock as well, and wrote several works on farm topics.

CREW ESCAPED.

Memphis, Tenn., Dec. 15.—The Mississippi River steamer Shiloh, operated by the Moltke Navigation Company, sank while tied to the Memphis wharf early this morning. All the passengers left the boat and the crew reached the shore in safety.

BANDIT TRAPPED

Caught in Mine and Will Be Starved Out by Posse.

(Canadian Press.)

Bingham, Utah, Dec. 15.—The part of the Utah-Apex Mine, in which Ralph Lopez, the slayer of six men, is believed to be hiding, has been bulkheaded. The sheriffs are of the opinion that Lopez is in this section of the mine, and that he is securely sealed up. The posse made no attempt at searching the section because the network of connecting corridors would have made it easy for the desperado to elude them. It is planned to starve Lopez out.

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