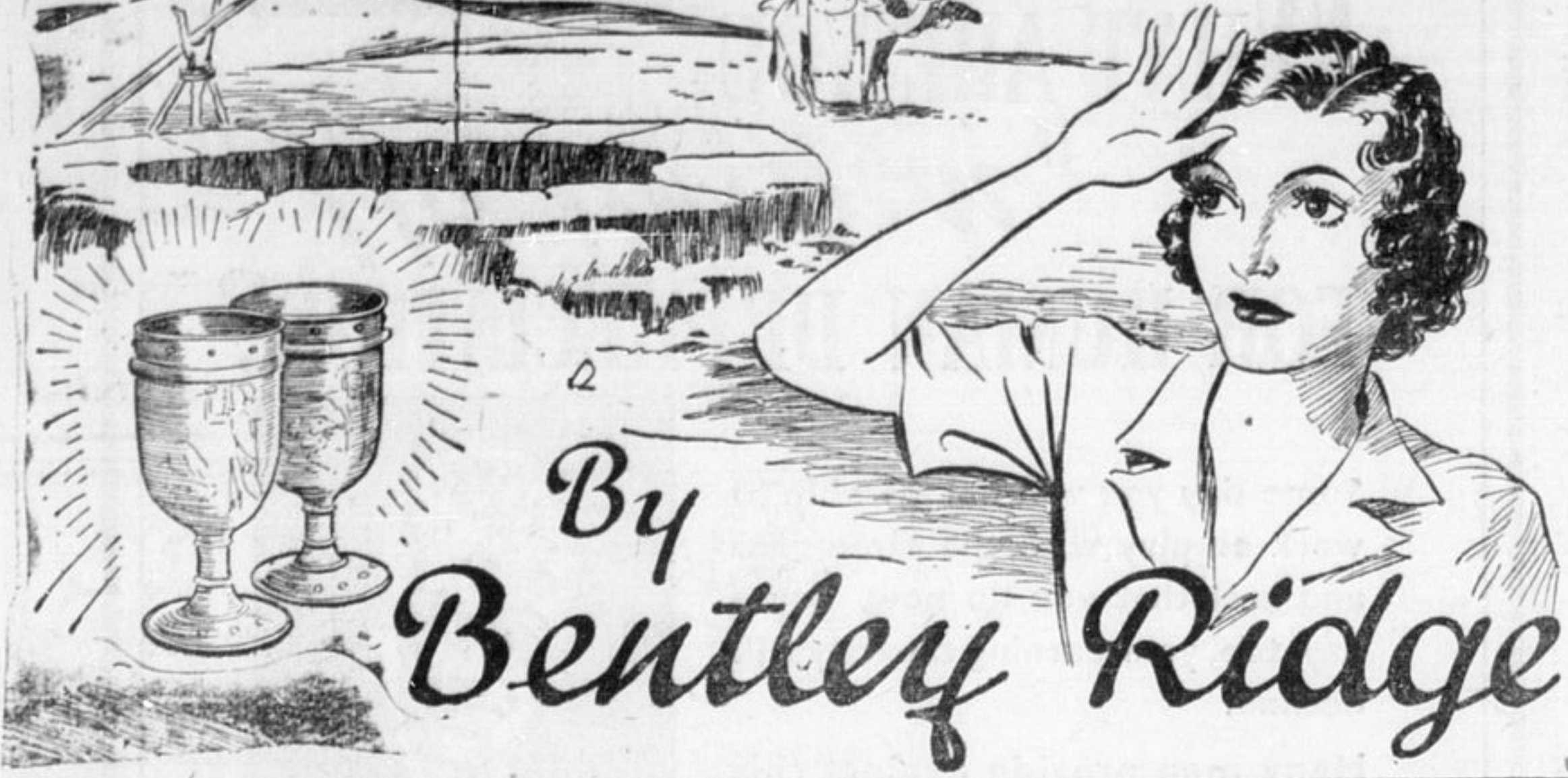


# WELL of GOLD



By Bentley Ridge

With only three instalments published in this thrilling new serial you can start right in to enjoy this attractive story. Here is a synopsis of what has gone before:—

### PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

**PHILIP GUTHRIE**, rich, scholarly, unmarried. Is greatly interested in relics of ancient civilization.

**PROFESSOR SHALEY**, distinguished archeologist. In charge of a small expedition financed by Philip Guthrie, the professor has been seeking in Iran (Persia) some ancient gold cups reputed to be hidden there. Shaley dies without discovering the treasure.

**JULIAN ORMOND**, Shaley's young assistant, takes charge on Shaley's death until Guthrie orders him home and dismisses him.

**HAFFI**, Julian Ormond's Persian servant.

**LYNNE ORMOND**, half-sister of Julian Ormond. Pretty, twenty-five; red-haired. Quietly brought up, and heeded to substantial wealth.

**MRS. BLAKEMORE**, Lynne's Aunt SOPHIE, by whom Lynne was brought up.

### THE STORY SO FAR

Philip Guthrie learns by cable from Julian Ormond of the death of Professor Shaley.

The Professor was in charge of an expedition which was digging in Persia in quest of some ancient gold cups reputed to have been made for Alexander the Great. Guthrie is deeply interested in the quest, and has financed the expedition.

Julian Ormond, who sent the cable, is the second-in-command. His message, besides announcing the death of his leader, recommends that the quest be abandoned.

Guthrie is astonished at the suggestion of giving up the search, because the Professor's last letter held out great hopes of success.

Accordingly, Guthrie wires to Ormond calling him home for consultation. On meeting, the two quarrel. Guthrie dismisses Ormond, and decides to go out to Persia and take charge of the expedition himself.

Julian Ormond believes he knows where the treasure is. But he needs money. He knows that his half-sister Lynne Ormond, has recently come into her share of their father's fortune.

Julian sees Lynne, proposes that she go out with him. Lynne, hungry for adventure, decides to go. Julian stirs her indignation by reciting a woe-filled story of how badly Guthrie has treated him. Hitherto, Lynne, though she knew Guthrie only by photograph and reputation, has admired him.

Now read on!

### WHAT LYNNE OVERHEARD

The rest of the day passed quickly while Lynne bought everything she thought she would need. Days on the high plateau of the Khorasan were hot as a rule, and nights were cold. Plenty of blankets were as essential as knickerbockers and slacks for day wear.

Lynne was thoughtful, however, and rather nervous as the time for her interview with Guthrie drew near. If he proved reasonable then for her the adventure would be at an end. It would be disappointing, and yet—she hardly knew what she hoped for!

At nine o'clock she took a taxi to Gower Street and walked in through the imposing portals of University College. Inquiry of the porter revealed that Guthrie was still in the lecture room but might be expected to emerge at any time.

Lynne waited in the hallway outside the room in which he was speaking. She could hear the murmur of his voice, and when a student opened the door to tiptoe in, the sound came to her distinctly. Not by any means an unpleasant voice, certainly Lynne grew rather more nervous as she waited.

At last the doors opened, and a crowd of students surged out. Lynne watched and finally Guthrie appeared, on the tail of the crowd, talking with a man as he came out. She saw that the snapshot of him at Beaumont was a good one.

Lynne wended her way through the passing students until she was at his side.

"Excuse me, Dr. Guthrie!"

He turned with an air of enquiry.

"I beg your pardon," said Lynne. "But I was told that I should find you here. I wanted to talk to you."

Her voice faltered a little and she steeled it; but she could not restrain the nervous flutter of her pulses at seeing him in flesh.

"Oh?" Guthrie looked surprised. He noticed the flaming hair, the dazzling fairness of the face before him, the eyes that were bright with a meaning that he could not quite fathom.

"What can I do for you?"

with which Guthrie had emerged from the lecture room vanished. He was puzzled, but his looks implied that he was not averse from talking with one so beautiful. They moved back into the lecture room.

"Well?" said Guthrie, his eyes still intent on her face. "What can I —?"

"I'm sorry to bother you," Lynne said. "Not at all."

"But they got no further for a short, dark man with a beard and spectacles came hastening across the hallway, and pulled up short in front of Guthrie, saying:—

"Oh—here you are! I've been looking for you everywhere. You were going to tell me —" he broke off as he observed Lynne standing beside them.

"All right, Stace," said Guthrie, and to Lynne. "Will you sit down? I won't keep you more than a moment."

"Yes, I'm sorry, but I have a train to catch at Baker Street. I've got to get away," said the bearded man, loudly.

So the interview was postponed while he and Guthrie got their business done. They moved a little way away from where Lynne was sitting. She noticed that Guthrie's eye was on her most of the time while he was talking. Then they moved down towards the door, and she heard most of what they were saying.

"To-morrow!" said the bearded man. "You're in a hurry, aren't you?"

Lynne could not hear Guthrie's reply, but the big man spoke more loudly:—

"Oh? Is that so? He's no use, you say?"

They were now standing within a few feet of Lynne, and she heard everything they said.

"Shaley didn't trust him," said Guthrie. "I disliked him on sight, myself. In fact, he strikes me as being a hound of the worst description."

Lynne, with an uneasy feeling, wondered of whom they were speaking; and she was not long in doubt, for the big man searched his memory aloud in a booming voice.

"Ormond?" he said. "Ormond? I don't remember the fellow!"

"He was never a student. Doesn't know the first thing about archeology," said Guthrie.

"Ormond! There was one a Major-General Ormond who had a place in Kent—"

"This unpleasant specimen is a son, I think," said Guthrie, absently, staring at Lynne, who was sitting with her eyes lowered, and giving not a sign of all that was going on within her.

"What have you done about it?"

"Given him the sack," replied Guthrie.

**I COULDN'T HELP HEARING**

To hear Julian's name banded about like this outraged Lynne's deepest feelings. It seemed so cruelly malicious. And his last casual remark was horribly galling. Had the conversation gone on a moment longer she would have jumped up and told them who she was. But the big bearded man suddenly decided that he must leave to catch his train; and shaking Guthrie warmly by the hand wished him luck and hurried out of the room.

They were alone. Students passed to and fro in the lobby outside, but the lecture room was empty.

"I'm sorry I had to keep you," said Guthrie. "Professor Stace couldn't wait. Now what can I do for you?"

Perfectly at ease and unaware of the tempest raging inside her, he looked at Lynne with a curiosity and interest which the indifference of ordinary politeness failed to hide.

"As a matter of fact," replied Lynne, her cheeks burning with anger. "You were already discussing the matter. I couldn't help overhearing what you said, and I gather that I'm wasting my time in coming here!"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I am Lynn Ormond—Julian Ormond's sister."

In the midst of his astonishment and discomfort, Guthrie looked for any likeness to her brother in the girl before him. There was none, except that her red hair was a more fiery edition of Julian's tawny mane.

"I see!" he said. "Naturally, I never suspected. And you heard what I said to Prof. Stace."

"I couldn't help hearing!"

"I was fairly outspoken, I'm afraid!" After a pause he added calmly, "I'm very sorry. I can do no more than apologize."

she walked blindly out of the lecture room, not trusting herself to say any more. She hastened across the lobby and down the steps, feeling that the whole world, with Guthrie in the lead, was against poor Julian.

### CHAPTER V STREET ASSAULT

Guthrie gazed at the doorway through which Lynne had disappeared; nothing would make him give in in the matter of Ormond, whom he thoroughly mistrusted. But sisters, perhaps, were not always like their brothers. Should he have been more conciliatory?

He emerged into Gower Street a few minutes later, and started to walk towards New Oxford Street with the matter still in his mind. Should he write to the girl and tell her that he was willing to let Julian Ormond rejoin the expedition?

After all, what harm could Ormond do, provided that one knew his ways, and did not trust him too far?

One side of his nature told him that the idea was outrageous, that it would be impossible to go back on his decision to steer clear of Ormond. But as he walked briskly along he was mentally composing a note which he might write to Lynne, informing her of his changed intention.

Absurd as the idea seemed it still stayed in his mind. He took a taxi from St. Giles Circus to Smith Square. When he arrived there his idea of reinstating Ormond had become a positive resolution. Why, after all, he thought as he walked up the stairs, should he cherish a useless enmity against Ormond—?

Something in the gloom, some movement behind the banister of the dark landing just over his head caught his eye. A warning of danger put him into action in a fraction of a second.

He ducked sideways, just in time to dodge the blow which was aimed at his head from the darkness above.

The blow caught his shoulder paralytically. But in an instant he was up the stairs. His assailant, a blacker shape in the blackness, dodged across the landing, and without a second's hesitation Guthrie flung himself at the intruder.

They both went down with a resounding crash, rolling over and over, and came to rest with Guthrie on top, the intruder writhing underneath.

"You —!" snarled the intruder breathlessly and unprintably. With one arm twisted under him he struggled

vainly to break the wrestler's grip in which Guthrie held him.

"You didn't know that one, did you?" said Guthrie, through his teeth. The intruder heaved helplessly, then broke into moans.

"Let up, Guv-nor! Let up, for Pete's sake. Me leg's broke!"

"What the devil were you at?" said Guthrie. "Hold on a moment—we'll get a policeman!"

He lightened his grip, and began to shout for his man, Tilot, whose room was at the back of the flat.

"Stop, Guv-nor—stop! Don't get thr legs. I'll tell you a thing or two if you'll let me off! Oh, cripes, my leg!"

"Oh!" Guthrie stopped shouting, recollecting as he did so that Tilot was out. "What do you mean?"

"Don't you go calling the cops—you won't get a word out of me if you send for the cops!"

Guthrie relaxed his grip and rose. He switched on the light, and his assailant sat up, nursing a useless leg and groaning.

He was a short, broad man, with a blue-black jowl and a broken nose; not long out of gaol, Guthrie surmised, from the shortness of his hair.

"Me leg's broke!" he groaned.

"Yes, but you were trying to break my head!" Guthrie said.

"I'll tell you about that, only don't you send for the cops. S'welp me, Guv'nor. I've just come out from a long stretch! Don't call the cops! I was put up to this. I was—if you let me off I'll tell you everything, see?"

"All right," said Guthrie. "You tell me."

"A bloke I never seen before give me ten quid to come along 'ere and crack you on the 'ead. Just a little tap, like, that's all; nothing to 'arm you, Guv'nor!"

Guthrie was astounded and sceptical. "S'welp me, Guv'nor, it's true! I met him—well, I ain't telling you where, see? He was a friend of a friend of mine, as sent him to me. He gave the name of Johnson. But he wasn't Johnson really, not on your life! I knew that! A tall young swell, he was, with a ginger beard."

"A red beard!"

Suspicion dawned upon Guthrie. "A lah-di-dah sort of voice 'e 'ad," offered the man the floor. "Oh, gad, my leg!"

Julian Ormond! There was no other possible person. Guthrie had an additional shock, when his defeated opponent said:

"And a girl, too with ginger hair."

I met her at Boodst, tube and she handed over the cash. But what and she 'ad in it, I can't say!"

**CONFESSION**

Guthrie, frowning grimly, went into the sitting room, and fetched a stiff whisky for his injured adversary. The man drank it.

"They told you to come here and hit me on the head, did they?" Guthrie asked. His difficulty now, when he realized how unscrupulous Ormond was—and the girl too!—was to understand their object. Surely no one would take so dangerous a revenge!

"Just to stun yer," said the man drinking his whisky thirstily. "And then," he added, "I wuz ter bring you in 'ere, lay you over the table, and give yer leg a little knock, like."

"My leg a little knock?" repeated Guthrie, puzzled.

"That's right!" said his assailant. "Just to break it, like."

Guthrie felt himself growing extremely angry.

"Splendid!" he said.

"Now you ain't going to call the cops, Guv'nor—have a heart, Guv'nor!"

"I'm not going to call the cops."

"They just wanted to have you laid up for a little while, Guv'nor, that's all. This feller with the ginger beard, he says to me: 'Guthrie's going abroad,' 'e says, 'an I want you to see to it that 'e don't go for a week or two.' So that's what we arranged like, between us. Just a broken leg. A nice clean break, like—and no harm done that you'd noticed after a month or two."

Guthrie gazed at him in disgust; the man lapsed into silence with a look of grief and injury on his features, and drained the remains of his whisky.

"What hospital do you want to go to?" Guthrie asked. "Westminster?"

Vastly relieved, the man agreed that Westminster would do very well, and Guthrie went to the telephone to ring for an ambulance.

So Julian Ormond wanted to delay his going to Persia! Ormond, then, had some game of his own to play out there—

Guthrie laughed scornfully as he recollected his thoughts on the way home that evening. Just because of the impression that Ormond's little devil of a sister had made upon him, he had been on the point of letting Ormond rejoin the expedition!

And yet—what had Ormond's hired thug said?—he wasn't sure that the girl with the ginger hair had had a hand in it.

As regards the girl, then, one could

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not be certain.

But of one thing Guthrie was certain indeed; and that was that he must get to Persia as soon as possible.

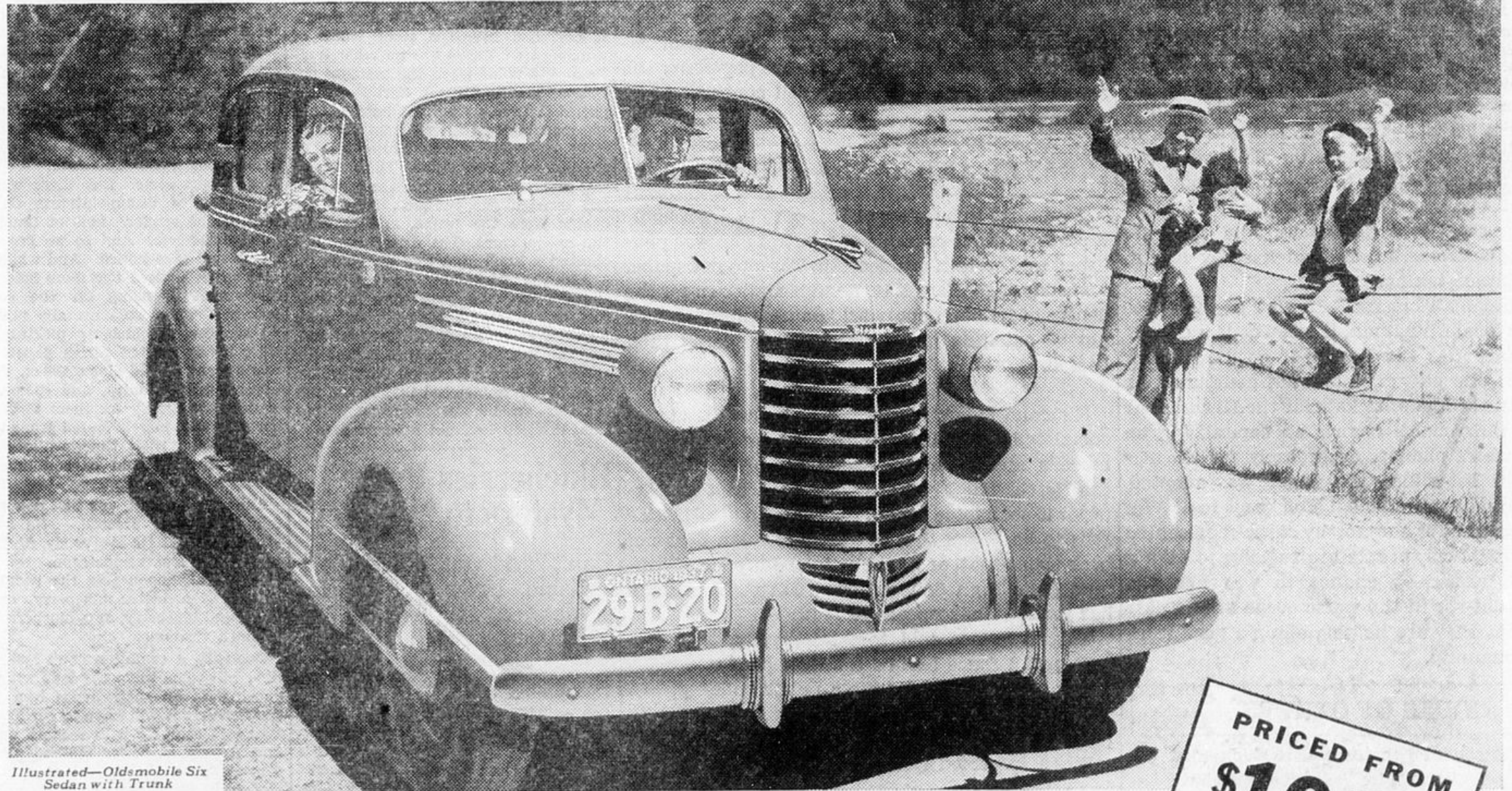
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