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TABLE TOP

by
Eden Phillpotts

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS

TOM AYLMER: At the time the story opens is living in Peru managing silver mines belonging to his father.

ANGUS MAINE: A young Scot on Aylmer's staff, and close companion of Tom.

FELICE PARDO: A Peruvian, who, although young, has been fifteen years in the service of the Aylmer Mining Enterprise. He is the most trusted native employee.

JACOB FERNANDEZ: A rich, elderly South American whose hobby is the study of bird life. He is a bachelor and is engaged upon a monumental literary work on the subject of bird life.

JANE BRADSHAW: Tom Aylmer's fiancée. At the time the story opens, the expectation is that these two will marry on Tom's next leave in England.

MRS. MERCY AYLMER: Tom's mother; egotistical and exacting.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTER

TOM AYLMER and ANGUS MAINE are enjoying a holiday on the hills of Peru when news from England tells of the death of Tom's father. Tom knows that his father has bequeathed to him the Peruvian silver mines of which he (Tom) is manager.

Before leaving Lima for England, Tom buys a parrot, to give to his fiancée, **JANE BRADSHAW**. According to the dealer, the parrot is about seventy years of age.

On the liner, the bird talks to **JACOB FERNANDEZ**, a rich man of Lima, who is bound for Panama, and whose life-hobby is the study of birds. But the only words he can defect in a string of sounds are "Benny Boss."

Fernandez says he knew a man of that name, and proceeds to tell Tom and Angus what he knows.

Benny was a man of mixed parentage English and Peruvian—who, for a time, fifty years earlier, worked for Fernandez. Piecing together what he learned about Benny in later years, it seems that Benny had been engaged in dredging on Lake Titicaca for jewels thrown into the lake at the time of the Spanish conquest.

Arrived in England, Tom obtains the help of an expert linguist, but the man is baffled.

Eventually Jane solves the problem by the discovery that most of the words are English spelt backwards to disguise the meaning of the message. They make the sentence "Table Top on Equator west Galapagos Cache Mancer George at Geyser," and this is construed as being a direction to the hiding-place of the jewels in which Benny Boss was interested.

Excited by the theory built about this message, Tom, Angus and Jane decide to go and investigate. Tom insists that **FELICE PARDO** should be included.

The estate of Tom's father having been proved at an amount largely in excess of expectations, and Tom being the sole heir, he feels that he can afford the expense of fitting out a small expedition.

(Now Read On)

"All in good time, mother," said Tom. "That's what Jane said. Very well for children but you must remember that I am an old woman in a hurry. However, if I have not learned to be patient, no woman ever did. I'll wait and see if anything happens. I'll promise to do nothing of any importance till you come back. Jane has a feeling that you may find Inca jewellery in abundance. It will probably be ornate and vulgar. I believe the Incas wore breastplate of precious stones and

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head-dresses two feet tall and stiff with gems. Also bracelets and anklets, glittering with emeralds and rubies and sapphires and so on. Such things—all set in gold no doubt—would be no use to me. One doesn't set gems in gold nowadays, and in any case I could not go to a bridge party or reception in a breastplate and anklets. But if the stones themselves were as marvellous as Jane thinks they well might be then, one could choose the best and have them made up again by experts. Do you think I am too old now for pearls? personally, if the pearls are worth calling pearls, they seem to me as beautiful on middle-age as youth.

"And you'll go on looking for a house when we're away—if we really do go?"

"Yes answered Mrs. Aylmer. "You know very well that I would be content with any little box in the West End if I thought it would help you and Jane to be happy. You're my first thought, I am going to be adamant about rent. I simply won't look at anything for which they ask more than fifteen hundred a year. You can feel perfectly happy about that. The position is what matters; but adequate reception rooms are vital. I will never entertain in hotels, Tom, and though one often goes to such entertainments, I always feel a chill sense of unreality. I was rather wondering about a villa at Cannes for next winter. My circle seems to gravitate bodily to Cannes after Christmas."

"The lady rambled on; but she promised faithfully not to buy precious stones until Benny's cache had been explored. She then turned to another subject.

"Jane seems to think that you won't marry until you return; but I hope you'll make her change her mind about that," she said. "It would be very embarrassing for a single girl to live in a ship entirely full of men. But if she were married to the leader of the expedition, one would feel happier about her."

"She's got an idea that it would be more embarrassing if we were married," explained Tom. "I don't see it myself, but she does."

"A mistake. However, she'll have her way no doubt. What is your foreign friend, Mr. Pardo, like? Sometimes a foreigner, with all his charm and glamour and southern fascinations, will turn a girl's head."

"There's not much charm and glamour about Felice Pardo," he answered. "He's a realist and doesn't like women particularly. He happens to be rather a short, solidly built man—the sort that wouldn't tempt Jane. He'll only be interested in photography if he really does come."

"You must all take care of yourselves—for my sake," said Mrs. Aylmer.

In the course of a few weeks, Tom heard from Lima, but knew not what had happened in Pardo's life before the letter came.

Felice had already received a full account of his friend's altered fortunes, and felt his mind at rest concerning his own future. He was ambitious and welcomed the possibilities of an overdue improvement of his own prospects; but though as a rule little ever happened to amuse him, the proposed attempt to find Tabletop made Pardo laugh aloud. Despite the facts and remote possibilities, Felice felt such an enterprise a waste of wealth and felt that if Tom was prepared to fritter some of his newly acquired wealth it might be put to far better purpose.

"If you want to spend money," he wrote back, "try Peru, not the Pacific. I've always told you that mineral exploration in the Andes might be very well worth while and I feel sure, from what you told me about old Jacob Fernandez, that he knows it too. You go for the mountains, not hidden treasure on a volcanic island, Tom. And by the same token, don't be in a duce of a hurry to part with Mount Atajo. If Fernandez seemed keen, then you may be sure he knows something. That man's twice a millionaire, they say."

Much more to the same purpose wrote Felice, but the letter was never dispatched for that happened before the sending in quite a different spirit and communicate in quite an unfolded under a vast new prospect unfolded under the young man's eyes and strange temptations assailed him from a still stranger quarter. Of all unlikely per-

sons, it was now destined that his own mother should play a sinister part and plunge his soul into perils beyond its experience.

CHAPTER VII (Continued)

THE "RIGHTFUL HEIR"

For the first time in his life, Felice found his silent parent voluble, and her customary reserve vanished.

It happened on returning from the office, after reading Tom's letter and writing his own reply that Felice, over their supper-table, told his mother the story of the parrot. Whereupon she had dropped her knife and fork and stared at him as at a stranger.

"What's struck you dumb, Mother?" he asked. "Not this nonsense from Tom? I've written and told him what an ass he is—dear chap."

"Have you posted it?"

"Not till to-morrow. An English boat comes into Callao to-night and I may hear again to-morrow."

"Finish your food and listen to me then," she directed.

When they had left their little dining room and sat out of doors on the patio, the young man smoked and his mother spoke at greater length than he had ever heard her do so. She was a handsome woman still, and might have wed again, but felt no mind to another husband, and had found the nurture and education of her only son enough occupation to make life worth while.

"You've told me a wonderful thing," she began, "and filled up bits of old history in a queer fashion, my son. Benny Aylmer would have thought twice and again before he revealed this story if he'd known what I know."

She rose, entered the room behind the door, and produced an object wrapped up in silver paper.

"Look at that," she said, and listen."

Felice opened the little parcel and found himself gazing upon a brilliant yellow stone set in gold.

"You never were interested in our history," continued Anita, "but you've got to be interested now. Your grandmother was a girl called Julia Boss, and she married a fruit-grower by the name of Pardo. He worked in Puna for two brothers called Garcia. That must be round about sixty years ago I suppose. Julia was the eldest daughter of Benjamin Boss—known to his generation as 'Benny'—a very remarkable man by all accounts. He had other children besides Julia—a son and a daughter—but their old mother had lost sight of them long before I knew her, and couldn't say whether they were alive or dead."

"Well, Julia wed Pardo and that stone you're handling was given to her by her father."

"The pair had one son and he was called Felice Pardo. At twenty-five years old Felice married me, and you are the only child that we ever had. Your grandparents on your father's side died not very long after my husband married me; but your great grandmother—Benny Boss's wife only passed about twenty years ago. Marie Boss she was called."

"I remember her when I was a small boy," said Felice. "She smoked cigars, when she could get them, and knew English and had a blue parrot."

"Start from her then and what follows?" asked Anita. "That blue parrot's living yet you see, and he's told his secret that Benny taught him to these alien people. He's told them where Benny hid his treasure when the Garcia got wind that he was playing them false. As to that there's little doubt. Benny took the pains to make up a riddle and teach it to his bird before he went on his last voyage, and the Hand of Providence points to you, Felice, as his only rightful heir."

"Stones are eternal things," she continued. "They outlive the hands and necks that wore them, and serve one generation after another, as that topaz served your grandmother, hundreds of years after it had shone on the breasts of the Inca priests. There's a hoard of wonders lying in wait for you, no doubt, on that island."

"Why for me, Mother?" he asked.

"Because the treasure was gathered by your great grandfather. And you are the only one left alive with Benny Boss blood in you. It came to you through Julia Boss, and her son, your father, was in the line, and if he'd lived, he'd have inherited anything that Benny had to leave behind. You are the rightful heir of the Boss family, and if this story is true and the old, adventurous man hid his property for safe-keeping on some God-forsaken isle, and lost his life trying to find it, again, then the treasure is yours, if ever it should be found. Not one quarter part of it, Felice, as Aylmer says, but all."

"Look back after these things," she concluded, "I'd say that Benny Boss knew he was going to have danger and trouble to recover his jewels, so being a whimsical fashion of a man, he invented his riddle, and left it behind him for other people to guess if they could, should he never come back, and foreign English folk have guessed it, because it's an English riddle and was easy for them to do so."

"I think it was a very clever thing to get to the bottom of this mystery," declared Felice. "You might easily ar-

gue that those able enough to solve the parrot's speech deserve to profit by it, Mother."

"Why argue anything so foolish as that?" she asked. "You are not used to being so sentimental. The treasure is yours and only yours. By a strange accident, but with no credit to them, they discovered the existence of the treasure; but that does not entitle them to possess it. The only question for you is how best and safest to make it your own. That needs a great deal of thinking about. You owe them nothing. You have worked for Tom Aylmer's father faithfully, and very little money did he ever pay you for doing so. Now Tom Aylmer is become a very rich man, while you continue to be a very poor one. But you find that an inheritance is awaiting you. Remember that nobody can be trusted when money is the question. Many courses are open to you, Felice, and you will need to choose the right one. As the great grandson of Benny Boss, you ought to be equal to whatever challenge awaits you."

"My friends have been good to me and there is a close tie that binds us three together," he said. "They are honest men, mother."

"You are now concerned with the future, not the past, and if they are honest men, they will not endeavour to come between you and your own," she answered. "But you must use the good brains that God has given you."

"What better than to tell them the truth and prove it?"

She shook her head.



That Body of Yours

(by James W. Barton, M.D.)

Rest The Main Treatment In Acute Heart Disease

A physician friend telephoned me recently and stated that he was going into hospital that evening for a rest as he had had a slight heart attack an hour previously. As he expected to be there for two or three weeks he asked me to drop in and see him. It would be just a social call as he contracted his heart condition in France during the War and was naturally under the care of the military physicians.

As I thought of his large practice and of his own active personality I wondered how he would remain in bed during the four to eight weeks that is usually prescribed. He informed me that the electrocardiogram showed the disturbance present.

As expected, his first statement was, "I've decided to stay in bed here two weeks, then go home and rest in bed another two weeks."

I asked him if that would be the way he would treat a patient with an acute heart attack. He admitted that he would insist upon the patient resting flat on his back for at least a month, but of course he knew enough to keep quiet.

"Well," I said "you know that rest is the only thing that will heal the condition and it can't heal if you are not at complete rest."

I knew he realized the seriousness of the condition and that undue effort, a large meal, or too much excitement might be fatal at this time, and was disturbed in mind as he spoke again of his plan of returning home in two weeks.

Fortunately the heart specialist, after reading another cardiogram, advised that not less than six weeks must be spent in hospital, flat on his back.

Immediately afterwards, another physician dropped in and casually remarked, "What's the trouble? Had a coronary attack? That's nothing. I've had three attacks and simply go to bed for six to eight weeks, take things easy for another six weeks, and here I am, doing my work the same as ever."

To see this sturdy acquaintance, looking so well (despite the attacks of coronary occlusion—blockage of a blood-vessel by a blood clot) due to the fact that he was willing to give the heart and bloodvessels a real chance to heal, was just what was needed to make my friend willing to remain in bed for six weeks, and to rest most of the time for a couple of months afterwards.

I believe the above little story, that physicians, to give the heart a real chance to get its power, do not depend upon medicine, but upon complete rest in bed, should be an object lesson to all of us, particularly to heart patients who may think that medicine, not rest, is the big factor in treatment.

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Hon. Mr. Euler May Not Have Been Very Wrong

(From Orilla News-Letter)

Do newspapers help to make wars? This question has been the subject of editorial discussion in a number of newspapers of late. Widely different angles of the situation were discussed, but the three editorials read by this column on the matter all upheld the newspapers help to make war by chronicling war news is nothing short of absurd. It is backed pretty much by the Lindsay Post which reproduced its editorial and the Porcupine Advance.

The Journal is rather severe on Mr. Euler, Canada's minister of commerce, for a statement to the effect that newspapers are largely responsible for the public belief that wars are inevitable.

The Journal takes the view that Mr. Euler is criticizing newspapers for chronicling war news and says his reasoning suggests that such action helps make war a bit childish. The Porcupine Advance adds:

"Newspapers do not make the news, but just chronicle it. Refusal to mention war wouldn't stop a single conflict, nor alter it. This has been aptly illustrated in recent times, by the fact that one war after another, crowded older wars out of the news, but the old wars bobbed up again as lively as ever."

There is no question that the Journal and Advance are right in arguing that newspapers chronicling straight news happenings could have little if any bearing on the situation. But Mr. Euler might not have been so "childish" as he might at first have seemed when one considers the wild deductions and propaganda which are sent out between "news happenings" under the guise of authentic news from certain newspaper correspondents. Subsequent events have shown time and again

that much of this so called news has been nothing more than imagination or at the best a guess by the correspondent. If this sort of thing was what Mr. Euler was referring to when he said that newspapers had a part in helping make wars, perhaps he wasn't so absolutely wrong.

At any rate the Canadian reading public have been breathing much easier since the King and Queen have come to Canada and have forced much of this war deduction news off the front pages. It would be foolish of course for the people of Canada to ignore preparing for any emergency which might arise out of the present delicate international tangle, but there is nothing gained by keeping the population at large in a continual state of jitters months in advance of something which may not materialize.

New Uniform Adopted for Use in the British Army

Smith Falls Record-News: Announcement that a new uniform had been adopted for service year by the British Army is further evidence of the radical changes which have been caused by mechanization. Some amusement, too, was caused by the fact that the uniform is almost identical with the "ski-suit" which was so popular among children last winter. But something which may have serious results is also being contemplated in the War Office. They are talking of abolishing the kit as uniform for Highland Regiments. We would not care to be on the general staff. Attempts have been made on other occasions to take away the Scottish soldiers' kilts. But the kilts—well it remained, even through the last war. First Contingent veterans will recall the terrific rumpus started when it became known at Valcartier that a too-efficient staff had decided to put the Highland regiment in the

"trews." What a storm there was, and, as we said before, the kilts survived.

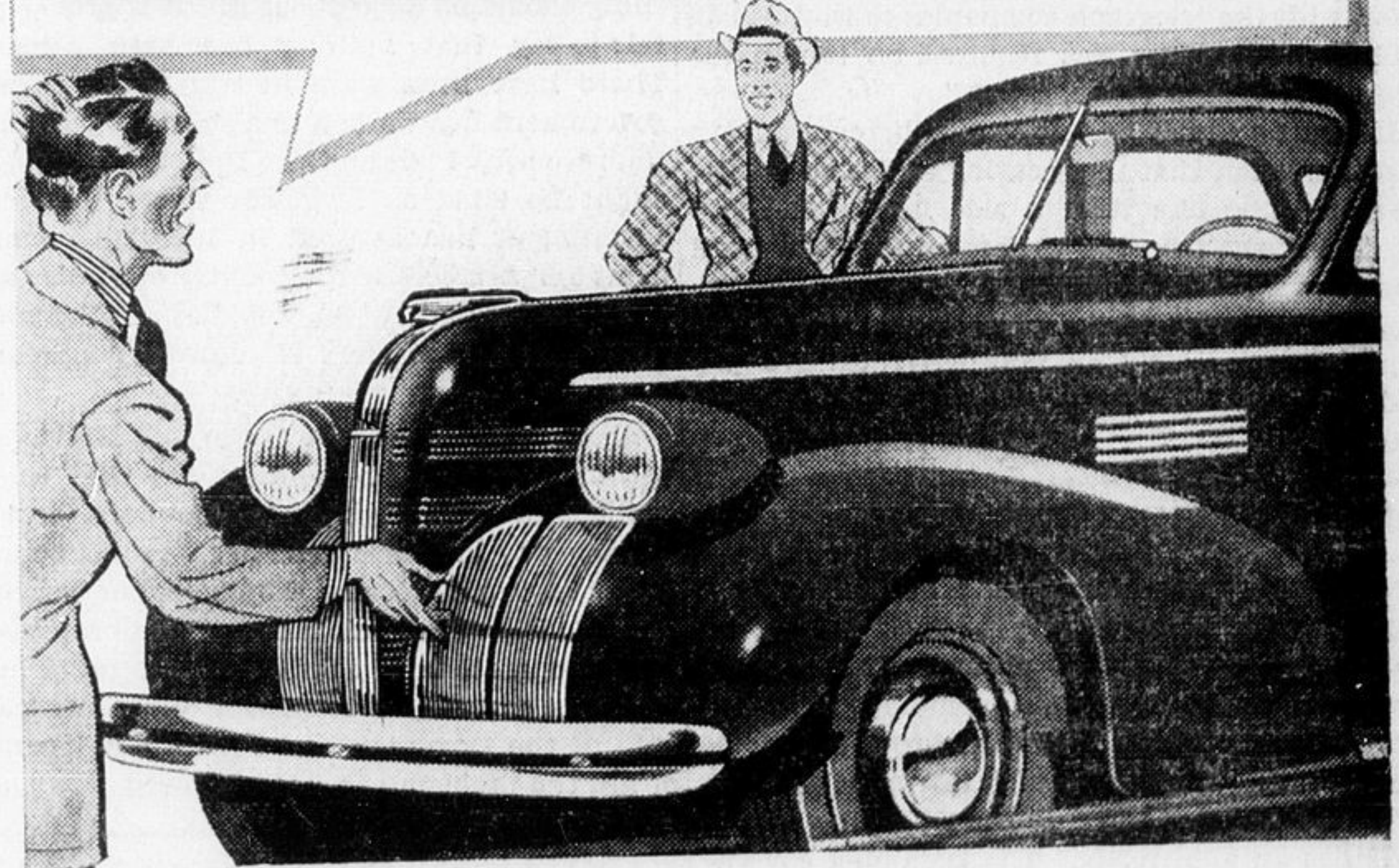
Waterloo Chronicle: An ardent love-lorn youth in Detroit was arrested for throwing firecrackers at his sweetheart. It is not the first time Cupid has touched off fireworks.

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