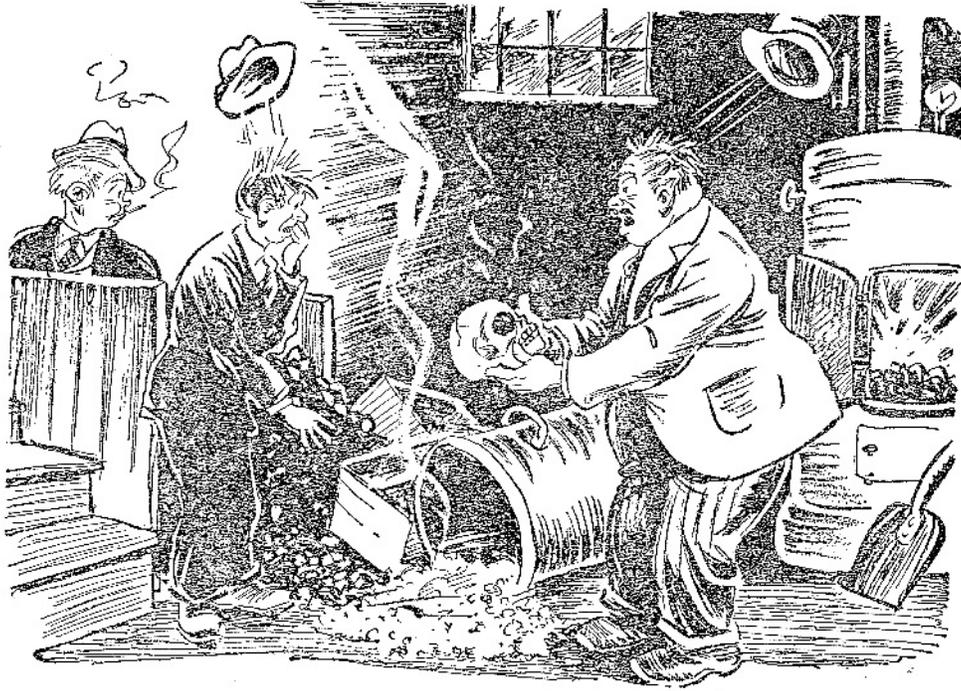


*When the corpse of Dr. Cuthbert Twill, peanut-eating surgeon, takes a powder, Snooty Piper thinks it is a case of delirium tremens they are dealing with and not corpus delicti. But when he hears the vanished corpse cracking peanuts, he figures it's a case of . . .*

# Heart Balmy

*"Dizzy Duo" Yarn*



*By Joe Archibald*

*Author of "China Yeggs," etc.*

**I**T IS the housekeeper of a big chateau in Lexington that calls the boys at LaGrange Street headquarters one evening. She tells them to hurry out there as she has found the citizen who pays her her stipend quite dead on the floor of his library.

Me and Snooty Piper happen to be hanging around the Beantown Scotland Yard when the female sounds the alarm so we hurry right out with the constables and get into the police boiler. But Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy, the big flatfoot who could double for King Kong, throws us right out again and we have to take a cab.

Iron Jaw tries to throw us out of the

house where the corpse was found, but the citizen who found it is in the doorway when we get there and she says that now it is gone.

"Somebody has took the corpse!" she shrieks. "While I was 'phonin'—"

Now all the gendarmes and flatfeet become so agitated over this strange to-do that they forget me and Snooty Piper. They all swarm inside while Iron Jaw bays: "Don't let nobody in or out. The murderer must still be here. Shoot on sight!"

We get into Dr. Cuthbert Twill's library, where his remains should be laying, and sure enough there is nothing

that looks like a defunct citizen. But on the rug there are little spots that were not made by strawberry soda. Iron Jaw opens up closet doors and peeks in, and he also looks under a desk.

"Tell the victim to come out or we will shoot," Snooty suggests. "Ha, ha, are you sure you was not seein' things, ma'am?"

"I tell you I saw the body of the poor doctor just as plain as I can see that detective there with the derby. An' he ain't no tadpole, is he?" the housekeeper snaps.

"Oh, is that so?" O'Shaughnessy snorts at the female character. "Well, I would not be so smart as you are the number one suspect here. What did you do with Twill? Stiffs don't fly away."

"I cut him up an' put him in that big flower pot there," the old girl counters. "I had some parts left over, an' I put them in my sewin' basket."

"Oh-h, we ain't got no bo-o-od-de-e-e-e!" Snooty Piper warbles, and even I am ashamed of him. Then he says: "Twill—Twill! Where have I heard of that citizen before? I am sure—"

It is the housekeeper that tells us about Dr. Cuthbert Twill and then we remember. It was not more than two years back that Twill did a very amazing piece of operating, and it was not on a guinea pig. Twill astounded the medical universe by operating on his own pump and fixing a valve that was not clicking quite up to snuff.

Ever since he did the plumbing job on his own ticker, he had been in very excellent health, but Dr. Twill refused to tell the other expert sawbones the kind of job he did as he was a very mean old character.

"I have heard of citizens takin' out a their own appendixes," Snooty says, "but patchin' up their own pump is quite novel, to say the least, isn't it? I should think Twill would've wanted to give the secret

to the world so that taxpayers with tricky tickers could get a chance to live ten or twenty years more."

"The doctor was no ray of sunshine around the house," the female character says. "He would not give a blind man a glass eye, and he has about drove me crazy eatin' peanuts. All day long he cracked 'em an' et 'em. I bet he ate more peanuts in a day than all the monkeys in the Franklin Park Zoo. Look at the shells there on the floor. Well, it's the last time I'll have to sweep them up. Say, don't all stand around! Do somethin'!"

"Round up all the other servants!" Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy explodes. "Get 'em here. I'm goin' down in the cellar and look around. Why, the killer might be burnin' the remains while we—"

"I wouldn't miss this," Snooty says. "Come on, Scoop!"

**I**RON JAW and three policemen and me and Snooty go down into the basement. Right away Iron Jaw dumps a lot of hot ashes out of a big ashcan. Snooty's green hat spins right off his scalp when a skull rolls across the stone floor.

"I knew it! I knew it!" Iron Jaw bellows. "They burned him up. Run upstairs, somebody, an' tell them to watch close as the assassin has had no time to leave the joint!"

The flatfoot picks up the skull then and starts up the stairs himself. "Look what I've got!" he hollers to everybody when we get back to the library. "In the ashes—the murderer—"

The skull is a little hot to handle, and Iron Jaw tosses it on an easy chair. Me and Snooty are very perplexed about it all. It is the housekeeper that picks it up, and she laughs like she found a comic valentine.

"Ha, ha," laughs Emma. That's her name—Emma Reek. "Look, O'Shaughnessy, it says right here 'Made

in *Cheeso-Slovakis*', and I am certain Dr. Twill was born in Pumphandle, Texas. I threw this ash tray away an hour ago. I couldn't stand havin' it grin at me any more. Why didn't you bring a detective with you?"

It is a very big laugh we get even if we are at a murder, and Iron Jaw picks up the skull and shows his bringing-up by throwing it right through a window. Outside, there is a gendarme keeping watch, and it is a half hour later that we find him in a coma in a tulip bed. Iron Jaw gets all the other servants and puts them on the grill after he comes out of his fit.

One is a butler with a sad pan like you see on a St. Bernard, and he says he does not know no more about the murder of Twill than Iron Jaw himself. O'Shaughnessy starts in on the maid then and Snooty nudges me and says:

"She's quite a dish, Scoop. Lookit her give me the eye."

"Where was you while Twill was bein' rubbed out, sister?"

"If I was your sister, I would sell you to Frank Buck," the doll comes back. "How do I know where I was while Twill was bein' murdered if I don't know what time it was he was murdered? Anyway, where is he—because if you can't see him, how do you know he is dead? Why don't you look around and see where he is? Then ask him what time he was killed and I will try to remember where I was while it was bein' done."

Iron Jaw takes off his derby and bangs it on the floor and he paws at his face and grinds his teeth.

"That's the stuff, babe," Snooty Piper chirps. "Make him talk!"

"You shut up, banjo eyes!" the maid snaps at Snooty, and the crackpot says to me:

"She ain't so hot when you get a second look at her."

Iron Jaw turns the whole house upside down then and when he gets through, he has not even a piece of Dr. Twill. Even Snooty looks stumped. Then two cops bring in a young taxpayer and push him toward Iron Jaw.

"He was prowlin' around outside an' was throwin' stones up at a window, O'Shaughnessy. I bet he's guilty."

"So-o-o-o!" Iron Jaw hoots. "Tried to get back in after gettin' rid of the remains, huh? What did you kill him for?"

The taxpayer's name turns out to be Harold Hickleberry, and he says he come to see the maid. She is that way about him, he says, and she sent for him.

"Why?" Iron Jaw bays. "Why did you send for him?"

The maid says: "Dr. Twill promised Harold that when he died, he could have the job of embalming him as Harold has just got his diploma to be an undertaker. Well, Harold might've been gypped out of such a good client if some other undertaker got here first. When I heard Mrs. Reek call the police and say Dr. Twill was dead, I thought of Harold right away."

"Ah-ha-a-a-a!" Iron Jaw howls. "Arrest Hickleberry for the murder of Twill. We'll make him tell where he hid the remains when we show him the sizzle sofa. Hold the dame for bein' an excessory, boys! Hickleberry needed a start and he rubbed out a citizen with a large bunch of sugar so he could get the business of putting the preservative into him. He hid the body so's no other undertaker could grab it."

**S**NOOTY PIPER shakes his dome. "Scoop," he says solemnly, "if Iron Jaw could lay an egg, you would find it cracked. This is the worst yet."

"You like peanuts?" Iron Jaw asks the graduate of a corpse-corning school.

“He hates ‘em,” the maid says quick. “They make him very bilious, don’t they, Harold?”

“Yeah.”

“Then what is that peanut doin’ in the cuff of your pants, wise guy?” Iron Jaw roars triumphantly. “I’ll tell you! You walked in and tried to bop Twill over the coco when his back was turned. He got up and grappled with you, and one of the peanuts he was eating fell out of his hand an’ dropped—”

“I—I was to a ball game at Braves Field this afternoon,” Hickleberry says. “I must’ve been sittin’ next to a guy eatin’ peanuts. I am innocent. I—”

“No kiddin’?” Iron Jaw brays. “How many hits did the Brooklyns get? Ha, ha, the box scores ain’t out yet. If he don’t know—”

“I—I—they got eight hits,” Harold says, and Iron Jaw tells a gendarme to call up the *Evening Star* sports department.

The citizen with the brass buttons does, and he tells us pretty soon that the Brooklyns only made three hits. Iron Jaw tells Hickleberry that there are two strikes on him and to please go without a fuss.

When they take Harold out, I says to Snooty: “I saw him wink at the dame, Snooty. He’s the guilty citizen as he was warning her to keep her pipes quiet. Let’s get out of here.”

“I do not see how they can do much about this assassination without the corpus delicti,” Snooty says. “I would not be surprised if it was still in this house. I don’t think Harold Hickleberry is guilty yet.”

Emma Reek starts sweeping up the peanut shells in the library and getting the stains off the rug the best she can. “It’s a pity,” she says. “Such an expensive rug, too! I’ll have to have it cleaned, I guess. I am surprised at Harold being so impatient as Twill could not have lived over two

more years with the way his liver was acting.

“I can’t understand how Harold could get the body out of the house so quick, though. Still, Twill was as skinny as a pipe cleaner, and Harold played fullback on the Lexington High School team once. He could’ve carried the corpse down the stairs and out to his car while I was telephoning, as I was very upset an’ it took me five minutes to even get the receiver off the hook.”

“It is very plain,” I says. “Harold has put the body where somebody will find it in a day or two, and it will be near his undertaking parlor and the cops will bring it there—”

It is just then that we hear a very strange sound, and Emma Reek drops her broom and hurries to keep her false teeth from popping out of her gums. It is a sound like somebody cracking peanuts. I hop out of a chair and grab bold of the tail of Snooty Piper’s green coat.

“It—it’s ghosts!” I says.

“He always said he’d come back after he died!” Emma stutters and she dives for the nearest doorway.

Snooty scoffs at me and says:

“You don’t believe in ghosts, do you, Scoop?”

“N-no,” I says, “but I’m afraid of ‘em. Listen, Snooty Piper, I’m leavin’ here at once.”

“It come from that big clock over there in the wall,” Snooty says, just like I have not spoken. “I bet that’s where the body is hid.”

“I am not interested,” I says. “I—Don’t you open that thing, Snooty Piper! Not while I am in this room anyway. Just give me time—”

I would have left Snooty right there, but my feet felt as if they were imbedded in concrete. Snooty opens up the old clock, but it is as empty as a promise from a

politician. I take a deep breath that could be heard all the way to South Boston, and I says:

“Come on, Snooty. You must be satisfied now.”

“I was sure I heard Dr. Twill crackin’ peanuts,” Snooty says. “Very weird, isn’t it, Scoop?”

“Let’s go home,” I plead with him. “There are two very big policemen here to keep watch, and they will break your skull if you try to disturb even a doily on a table in this tepee.”

“There is the butler,” Snooty says as we go into the next room. “I feel very sorry for the old beaver. He must’ve been the only character here who liked Twill. Let’s talk to him.”

**T**HE BUTLER, we have already found out, is named Wilberforce. Snooty tells Wilberforce he is very sorry about it all and isn’t everything terrible?

Wilberforce nods gravely and doesn’t even look up. “I will miss him very much,” he intones. “The place here used to be mine, and I put everything I had into it that I made from the theatre. Dr. Twill saw that it was going to break my heart to lose it, and he said I could stay on and be like a butler, although I wasn’t really one. Twenty years ago that was—I retired when I was fifty-five. I’m an old man now—”

“Seventy-five is not adolescent,” Snooty admits. “Now don’t take it to heart, Wilberforce, as maybe Dr. Twill is no more defunct than you. I noticed that Emma Reek’s breath was having an alcoholiday. She does like a nip or two, I am quite certain.”

Wilberforce confessed that Emma had never been any Carrie Nation. “Then she was seein’ things,” Snooty declares. “I bet she never saw no cadaver on the floor. Dr. Twill will turn up perhaps when you least

expect him. Well, good evening, Wilberforce.”

Emma Reek calls to us as we walk through the hall. “How ‘bout a li’l snort before you go?”

“No, thanks,” Snooty says, “and don’t you take any more or you will be calling up headquarters and telling them that you are looking at the Boston Massacre. Come on, Scoop.”

We go down to the Greek’s. Snooty Piper sips a beer and says he is sure Twill is really liquidated as the rug at his shack was not stained with catsup. “But I can’t understand about Harold an’ the dame,” he complains.

“I thought you was bright,” I says sneeringly. “I have got it all figured out. If Harold did not erase Twill himself, he thinks the dame did to give him quite a head start in the undertaking business, as stuffing Twill should bring quite a fee. Harold is a noble character and will take the rap for her if he thinks she is guilty. It is one or the other, Snooty.”

“I am positive that Twill’s remains were still in that shack while we were there,” Snooty goes on stubbornly. “I been thinking, Scoop. No doubt even you have heard of *rigor mortis*? Well, if Twill had peanuts in his hand when he was knocked off, he might have clutched them very earnestly when he took a dive. They were still in his fist when he was hid away in that room, and when *rigor mortis* set in, his fist closed up even tighter and crushed the peanuts. See?”

“Let me out of here,” I says. “Don’t you dare lay a hand on me, Snooty Piper, or I will fight to the finish. You are violent now—”

“You are not very much more help to me than Iron Jaw, Scoop Binney,” Snooty says severely. “I think I will drop you.”

“Put that in writing,” I says. “And then call up the *Evening Star* and give them

what we know, as after all it is what we are paid for.”

Snooty calls “Dogface” Woolsey, the city editor, and says: “All we know is that Twill is A.W.O.L. There are no signs of his shell anywhere in his ménage, and the student mortician who is in the icebox, won’t tell where he cached the corpse if there is one. Twill’s housekeeper is a soak, and she is liable to see anything, even a P.W.A. worker at work. More later—maybe.”

“Oh, you know everything, don’t you, Piper?” Dogface yells back at Snooty, and the crackpot digs into his ear and holds the receiver at arm’s length. Across the room I can hear the C.E. holler:

“Well, you listen to this, Piper. The Harvard Medical School has put in a complaint to police headquarters. This Twill signed an agreement with them just six months ago that for a hundred thousand dollars they could have the ticker he fixed up at that time. He’s already got—or had—the hundred grand and now they’re holding the bag.

“They want the body of Twill, dead or alive. How do you like that one, Piper? If you’d spend a nickel to call up the *Evening Star* once in a while, you could keep posted on world affairs.”

Dogface gets Snooty Piper quite angry with his insults, and Snooty says for him to take his face out to Franklin Park to scare a chimp out of a hiccough attack. The C.E. tells Snooty he is fired and for Snooty to tell me that I am fired, too.

“It is a very pretty pass we have come to,” I says. “Everybody in Boston but us knows that Twill has gyped the Harvard Medical School. He is a crook and it is good riddance. Who cares if he has been assassinated?”

“Scoop Binney,” the green gartersnake says to me, “you get dumber by the minute. That is the motive, ha, ha!”

FOR ONCE I agree with him. “Harold, being an undertaker, must have practiced on a lot of stiff,” I says. “I bet he got word somewhere that Twill made the bargain and he figured that—”

“Shut up!” Snooty says. “I have to do the thinking as you have no brains.”

“I want you to understand that the Binneys are as bright as the Pipers any day,” I bridle. “I have a cousin that got into the Harvard Medical School!”

“No kiddin’?” Snooty says, interested.

“Yeah. They have got him in a bottle,” I says. “Ha, ha!”

We get another shock the next A. M. It seems that the criminal character behind the disappearance of Twill has come right out into the open and the Harvards have got a letter from the rough citizen. It says they can have the mummy of Twill if he is so important for one hundred thousand berries as they will not be any more hoggish than Twill was. The letter is printed in all the papers and is worded as follows:

WE HAVE GOT TWILL’S BODY. IF YOU WANT IT, IT WILL COST YOU ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. THE DOUGH MUST BE IN OLD BILLS AND DON’T TRY TO MARK IT. IF THE COPS BUTT IN AND COME WITHIN TEN BLOCKS OF THE SPOT WHERE YOU ARE TO HAND OVER THE DOUGH, TWILL WILL BE CUT UP AND SHREDDED LIKE CRABMEAT AND THEN TRY AND FIND OUT HOW HE PATCHED UP HIS PUMP. THE MONEY IS TO BE HANDED TO OUR CONTACT MAN AT—

The Harvard medical characters have withheld the place of the payoff from the journals and the cops. It is a safe bet that Twill’s carcass will be turned over for

cash without the gendarmes being within fifty blocks of the spot.

"It's an outrage," Snooty storms. "I wouldn't pay. I—"

"So the body of Doctor Cuthbert Twill was in the house when we were there, huh?" I taunt him. "Don't be silly. While Emma Reek was telephoning the cops and having a couple of snorts of giggle juice, the assassin could have carried off the sun parlor out there. Maybe in a grocery or laundry wagon that come in just at the right time. Harold had it figured to a nickel, I bet. Well, they've got him locked up, but his accessory will handle the payoff—"

"The rough character who got Twill's corpse out of the house had to be a fast worker," Snooty says. "Even Houdini couldn't have got a stiff to vanish that quick. Even—SCOOP!"

Snooty lets out a terrific yelp and lifts me right off the sidewalk. "Don't scare me like that, you fathead!" I gulp.

"We are leaving for Lexington this very minute," the numbskull says. "I knew Twill was crackling peanuts after he was exterminated. The *Evening Star* will fire me, will they?"

"They already have," I remind him.

I do not know what is on Snooty Piper's mind as we head for Lexington, but I know it means trouble for Scoop Binney. On the way we read what a later rag has to say about the Harvard's beef against the late Doc Twill. It tells us that Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy has been giving more degrees than there are in the Masons to Harold Hickleberry to make him come clean.

They have grilled the dame, too, until she is almost scorched, but the plucky two have not told Iron Jaw enough to write down on the back of a Bull Durham tag. Harold has admitted that he was looking forward to the time when he could inject

the preservatives into Twill as it would mean that he could marry the frill. But he claimed he did not take things into his own hands.

WELL, WHEN WE get over to the late Twill's domicile, there are six cops ringing the place about and Snooty says he did not remember that Twill had a grain silo on his place. I says that is only Iron Jaw with his back turned and the thing that looks like a cupola is his derby.

"What do you two mutts want out here?" Iron Jaw bellows. "What do you know about this?"

"I won't tell you," Snooty says, "but I do put quite a lot of stock in the theory of *rigor mortis*."

"It wa'n't poison that killed him, ya halfwit!" Iron Jaw brays. "Poison don't make no citizen bleed. *Rigor mortis*, huh. I bet there ain't no such poison anyways. H-huh—er— Hey, you guys!" he suddenly yells at a delivery truck that is coming up the Twill driveway. "What're you after? You can't come in here."

"Don't be silly," a very tough looking driver comes back. "We're in. We come to git a rug to be cleaned. Ain't business bad enough 'thout no cops spoilin' it, huh?"

"Oh, a rug, huh?" Iron Jaw barks. "Well, I will watch it close when it comes out. They ain't gonna wrap up no corpses under my nose."

Me and Snooty go into the library where Wilberforce has just finished rolling up a rug. Emma Reek, a little scalded, is watching him, and she looks at us and asks what the devil we want coming back where we don't belong?

"I hope there is not a body in there," I says. "The detective thinks Twill is gettin' moved out, Wilberforce. Ha, ha, silly, ain't he?"

"Oh, I am, am I?" Iron Jaw shoots at me and walks into the library. "I ain't

takin' no chances. Let me see you unroll the rug again, Wilberfuss."

"Oh, of course," Wilberforce says. "Watch me very closely, Mr. O'Shaughnessy."

Wilberforce unrolls the rug and rolls it up again right before Iron Jaw's eagle eye and then he says: "Are you satisfied, Mr. O'Shaughnessy? You suspect everybody, don't you? All right, boys," he says to the delivery men. "Take the rug out and don't stop to pick up a corpse on the way out."

"Well—er—I have t' do my duty, Wilberfuss," Iron Jaw apologizes. "Ha, ha, we detectives do not overlook any possibility—"

"Just one moment," Snooty Piper chirps quite dramatically. "I am not satisfied, Wilberforce the Great. Put down that rug, boys."

"H-hey, make up your minds, ya—"

"Put it down an'—all you cops watch these two characters who drove the truck in here. Wilberforce, I will do the unrolling this time. It is a very large rug, isn't it?"

"Snooty," I says, "you saw there was nothing in the rug. Don't be a screwball. With your own eyes—"

"You forget one thing," Snooty says, and I see Wilberforce get quite worried in the peepers. "You heard him say 'Watch me very closely,' didn't you? Well, watch me closer, everybody, as Snooty Piper does not believe anything he sees, even."

Snooty unrolls the rug, and Emma Reek passes out quicker than a gang of school kids at recess. Right there on the floor is the very skinny shell of Doctor Cuthbert Twill.

Iron Jaw does quite a variation of the Virginia Reel and then falls into a chair. I am not quite myself at the moment, as I am in a half swoon and batting exclamation points from In front of my eyes.

**W**ILBERFORCE is every day of seventy-five years of age, but the character proves quite agile in getting a roscoe out of his pocket. A bullet smashes a bowl of goldfish near Iron Jaw O'Shaughnessy, and all the water and the fish go into the flatfoot's lap. A lot of crystals come off a chandelier when he shoots the second time.

Then he tries to get out the window, but it is Snooty Piper who gets him from behind and takes his pants half off.

"Somebody hold him!" Snooty hollers. "There is only eight of you gendarmes here. I—I ain't the criminal. Help *me!*"

We finally get Wilberforce subdued. Emma Reek is also being watched carefully by the cops while Snooty tells us how he solved the mystery of the missing cadaver.

"Wilberforce told me that he was in the theatre once," Snooty says. "It wasn't until afterward that I thought of his name again. I remember my old man used to argue with me that Wilberforce the Great was better than Houdini. I remembered that Emma Reek said she was going to have the rug cleaned, too, and I says to myself it is a very big thick rug that you could almost roll a very good-sized crocodile in and hide it.

"So I says, if this is Wilberforce the Great who worked for Twill, something must be screwy. I was pretty sure that Twill's corpse was still in the house as I heard *rigor mortis* set in on him and he had peanuts in his hand at the time—"

"Ar-r-r-gh!" Wilberforce groans. "He did. He was eatin' peanuts, the old skinflint. Maybe that was one reason why I bumped him. All day long crunch—crunch—crunch—"

"Wilberforce is very smart even at his age," Snooty goes on, "and he did the rug-unrolling act in such a manner that it

would fool anybody. They are very smart, these magicians. They can make a horse disappear—even Iron Jaw—in front of your eyes. But I unrolled it very clumsily and there was Cuthbert Twill!

“Ha, ha, instead of a hundred grand for Wilberforce, it is no dice and the sauté armchair in the State Rotisserie.”

“Yeah, you win, Snooty,” I says. “But how about Harold? He acted very guilty when he was arrested. He lied about bein’ at the ball game an’—”

“It was because he was not sure whether the maid had rubbed out Twill.” Snooty explains. “Anyway, I bet Harold saw a chance to get some dough by being falsely arrested. He looks like quite a bright boy. Well, he will come out of the icebox just in time to corn what is left of Doc Twill. After they take the ticker out of him, of course. An amazing case, isn’t it, Scoop?”

“Y-yeah,” I says uncertainly. Then I brighten up. “Who says the Harvards haven’t got a heart now, huh, Snooty?”