



# So Very Inquisitive!

By  
Thomas Thursday-

(COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE)

## CHAPTER I. HIS DAILY QUESTION.

**D**OC, there's more adventure to an inch of New York than you'll find to a mile of Africa at midnight! You never know what's around the corner, on the corner, or in the corner. If you amble through Central Park in the twilight you have six chances of being held up and five chances of being held down. This burg has more action than a ton of feathers in a Kansas tornado. If you take a quiet walk you may be entertained by a falling brick or run over by a playful taxi. In other words, Doc, I like the town. And now, if you're awake, I'd suggest that we start out for a slice of adventure."

No doubt you're aware that the above oration was delivered by my pal and hotel roommate, "Everready," or "Keen" McCoy, the world's famous circus fixer, et cetera. As he orated he fired a brush at the wall, a comb at the ceiling, and beat a tattoo on the brass bed so that I would be able to enjoy my sleep with as little noise as possible.

At the time he started his ballyhoo, I was dreaming that I was back with the Move-A-Long Side Show, debating with the attractions I tried to manage, and was turning large crowds away with

the aid of the constable and the mayor—who was also the constable.

You have heard, perhaps, that Everready and I had quit the show for a few minutes and skidded to New York to see what was going on, off, up, down, and in between. We registered at the Hotel Gypdorf, where everything was cheap except the price of admission, bell hops, clerks, and the rest.

"Doc," said Everready, "I feel an adventure coming on me already. If you're half dressed, we'll amble out and see what happens. The sun is shining brightly, the air is a shade better than gorgeous, the clouds are drifting by and—"

"Drift with 'em!" I growled. "I'm unlucky on the adventure stuff."

"Not at all," was his calm reply. "This way, my boy." We made our way to the main floor. "You know, Doc," said Everready as we reached the clerk's desk, "I feel sure that this day will net us some great and unforeseen pleasures. You never can tell—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," said a little flipper who had suddenly moored alongside Everready; "permit me to introduce myself. I'm known as the Inquisitive Reporter of the *Daily Trombone*."

"Fine—play us a tune!" I ejaculated.

"My dear sir," returned the stranger, "the *Trombone* is not an orchestra; it's a gre-a-t newspaper. What's more, I have been

commissioned by the editor to ask a daily question of five prominent citizens.”

“Step aside, Everready,” I commanded; “the gent wouldst converse with prominent citizens only. Shoot the question, mister!”

“The question for today,” obliged the reporter, “is, ‘What do you think of our popular songs?’”

“Didn’t know we had any,” I tossed back. “Believe me—”

“Don’t mind what the boob says,” interrupted Everready, pushing me for a goal at the same time. “Doc is sore because he once wrote a song and it fell as flat as a sidewalk. It was called ‘Just As Soon As My Shoes Wear Out I’ll Be On My Feet Again.’ It was finally accepted by an ash can. But say,” broke off Everready abruptly, “I don’t get your idea at all. What’s the game, hey?”

“I’ll explain,” elucidated the reporter. “Each day I ask a single question of five prominent citizens, both ladies and gentlemen. Their answers are published in the evening edition, and read by the ten million who comprise our family of readers.”

“Great stunt!” vociferated Everready, slamming me on the back for an exclamation point. “That’s my idea of good showmanship. I’ll bet you get into some tight places asking strangers questions, don’t you?”

“Quite so—quite so,” agreed the flipper solemnly. “Would you believe me when I tell you that I risk my life almost every day? Why, only last Wednesday I accosted a gentleman and had to run for my life! Yes, sir; I had a narrow escape. The question for the day was, ‘What do you think of the Chinese?’ The man I quizzed happened to have a bundle of laundry under his arm.

“When I put the question to him he became purple in the face, opened up the bundle and pointed to three scorched shirts, ten ripped collars, and a few burned handkerchiefs. Well, sir, would you believe me I told you that he hit me over the head with the entire assortment?”

“Bully—great—fine!” roared Everready. “You’ve got the dandiest job in the world. I wish I—Say!” he suddenly exclaimed. “I’ve got a proposition to make to you. Listen! Doc and I will give you a rest for the day. See? We’ll go out and collect the questions while you rest up. In other words, we’ll switch. Doc and I will have a bunch

of fun, won’t we, Doc?”

I very nearly collapsed. “I wish to state,” I said, “in behalf of Doc Ramble, that he isn’t interested. His bones don’t mend as rapidly as they should. Better take the army with you instead. You’ll need it!”

“What say?” went on Everready to the reporter.

“Your—er—ah—proposal is most extraordinary,” mused the question grabber. “I wonder what the editor would say? It’s most unusual, you know. Most—”

“That’s the idea!” enthused Everready. “Everything will be O. K., P. S., and N. B. Run along to the movies, Mr. Trombone, and meet us here in about two or three hours from now. C’m’on, Doc—let’s go!”

## CHAPTER II. RISKY BUSINESS.

**W**E left the dazed reporter scratching his ear, and breezed through the revolving squirrels’ playground, or hotel door.

“Just a moment,” I growled as we hit the street. “I wish to say that my insurance is somewhat in arrears and—”

“Great luck, hey, Doc?” chuckled Everready, paying less attention to me than if I was then touring Brazil. “Man alive, just imagine the sport we’ll get out of asking folks questions in this scintillating burg! Just imagine the adventure and fun we’ll bump into. Just imagine—”

“Aw, bean soup and the like!” I howled in assorted rage. “Just imagine the ambulance bells playing a neat sonata for our benefit; imagine some husky yapbean tapping us for a triple over the north star; imagine some peeved business gent testing our medulla oblongatas with the lead end of his cane. Yeah, you big stonehead, imagine that!”

“Doc, your imagination is swinging off the hinge. Every time you think you set yourself back at least two yards. Trouble with you, you’ve got too much imagination—which is the greatest handicap that any bird can have, copy-book maxims to the contrary notwithstanding. Now listen! We’re supposed to ask five persons a question entitled, ‘What do you think of our

popular songs?' Is that right, Doc?'"

"No—it's wrong!" I snapped. "To ask such a question of intelligent beezarks is the same as tossing a torch at a celluloid collar. Leave out the 'we' stuff; *you* do it. I'll give the doctor your right name at the right time. I wish you joy!"

"Therefore, my dear Doc," Everready went on, "I have decided to permit you to ask the first question. Look—see that young lady standing over there, slanting the novels in that drugstore window? There's your chance. Walk up to her with a little pep, bow like a gentleman—if possible—and ask, 'Madam, what do you think of our popular songs?' Just like that. Go ahead—I'll stand over here and see if you do it properly."

I took one peek at the fair member of the used-to-be-gentle sex and shivered like a flat-wheeled box car. The lady was dressed like the gold supply, with silver trimmings, and wore a suit that must have set back everybody but herself four fifths of the mint. Her hat had at least nine more colors than a dozen rainbows, while her complexion would have made a sunset look like midnight at the bottom of the Black Sea.

"Hey, listen," I back-fired at Everready, "do I look loony?"

"Sure—how many times must I answer that question? As a matter of fact, you shouldn't be managing a side show; you should be the chief attraction. Now stop the small-time comedy and go up and interview the lady. She appears to be quite tame—for a woman."

Well, you can only die once, as the chap—whatever that is—said after eating a seven-course Chinese dinner. I first removed my reserve supply of nerve from my vest pocket, oiled the same up neatly, then sneaked up on the successor to the Queen of Sheba.

I stood behind her for a few seconds, inspected the sidewalk for a soft place to fall, if need be, and then stuttered the question. "Beg pardon, madam," I opened up, "but what do you—ah—think of our popular ball players? I mean—er—what do you know about our popular songs, hey?"

She turned a pair of man-taming eyes on me as if I was a stray slice of air that had ruffled her hat, and glared like the headlight on a compound engine. "Sir!" she yelped. "Is it possible that you are addressing *me*?"

"No—envelopes!" I relayed back. "You see, lady, I'm what is—er—known as the Nosey Reporter for the *Evening Whistle*—I mean *Trombone*. See? Ha, ha! Yeah—I'm now—asking——"

All of which was the end of that. The door of the drug store snapped open like a busted rubber band and out bounced the biggest bird I have ever seen outside of a monument of Julius Caesar. His face was as red as the catchup supply, his whiskers would have made a nest for at least one eagle, while his nostrils dilated like the bag of a vacuum cleaner.

"Ah-ha-a!" he snorted. "Caught in the act, eh? So! A man can't leave his wife without her flirting with some rough creature, eh? So! What is the world coming to, huh? Answer me! What is the——"

I didn't know, and cared less. All I know is that I hotfooted it down the street so fast that I beat out Halley's comet by a full tail. When I reached the corner I parked up against a lamppost and watched Everready leisurely saunter up as if nothing had happened outside of a friendly argument between a couple of bantamweight flies.

"Ah, there you are, Romeo," he beamed as he nonchalantly eased up. "What did she answer, hey?"

I knocked him over with a single glare. "Let's move rapidly, if not quicker!" I snapped. "The young lady is now enjoying a debate with her husband. As for me, I'm willing to admit that as an interviewer I'd make a great tragedian for a movie comedy. I couldn't interview a bed without getting hit with the slats. You can oblige by accepting my resignation at once and immediately. I'm through!"

"Just as I thought," said Everready with disgust suspending from each word. "You haven't got the diplomacy of a flying yakwoof. I'll go up to the next lady and show you how it's done. Watch and learn. Follow me, marble-head!"

"Nothing doing!" I barked. "I am now en route back to the hotel with the greatest of speed. If this is your idea of a good time I wouldst prefer a job as a tester in a tack factory bouncing up and down on the points."

Just then a complete set of beauty ambled up and stood on the corner. One slant at the girlish gem convinced me that she would have made

Mary Pickbanks look like Old Mother Hubbard in comparison.

She was draped in a new spring suit that would have been long enough to reach her knees by stretching it about a yard, and wore a hat with enough feathers to keep no less than ninety hawks flying for a week. She had a figure that no adding machine could total, and a face that would have made Cleopatra appear to be her grandmother.

“Ah, there we are, Doc!” exclaimed Everready. “See that delightful contribution to feminine charm, and all that sort of stuff? Evidently she’s waiting for a taxicab. Remain here while I endeavor to show you how to address a lady without causing a riot. Observe how I do it.”

The next act on the bill of fare presented Everready swaggering up to the young lady as though he had just been appointed ambassador to nothing less than the solar system, and tipping his lid as if he was the lineal descendant of Lord Chestyfield. He tossed her a radium-plated smile that was a winner from the first crinkle, and then bowed halfway to the ground.

I was in high hopes that the girl would not miss the great opportunity of testing his knob with her umbrella, or at least let out a shriek that would summon nineteen cops to her rescue. It now pains me to report to the audience that my hopes were blasted higher than the universe.

I almost collapsed from sheer amazement—whatever that stuff is—when I noted the Empress of Beauty present Everready with a smile that would have melted six acres of Greenland. Had I performed the same act it’s a ten-to-nothing shot that the entire police department would have been on the entertainment committee—with the army and navy as toastmaster!

Everready next buzzed something in her ear. She murmured back, after which I fell against the lamppost from assorted rage. They talked a little more, chattered a little more, and then Everready bowed and broke away.

“Well, Doc,” he asked on his return, “did you see how that was done? Quite simple—when you have a little culture.”

“What answer did she give?” I wanted to know.

“I don’t think she understood the question. She replied that, in her opinion, ‘Old Black Joe’ will some day make a hit.”

“She’s right up to date, hey? I’d like to see the expression on her face when she hears that Columbus is dead.”

“Well, Doc, let’s amble around to the Hotel Bilkmore and try our luck. The best people hang out there, you know.”

“Best people, hey?” I tossed back. “Do you mean plumbers, bricklayers, carpenters, farmers, and the like? They’re *my* idea of the best people. They work for a living. The rest run for Sweeney!”

### CHAPTER III. IMPERFECT STRATEGY.

AS we approached the gold-inlaid entrance to the Bilkmore, Admiral Doorturner, dressed up like assorted generals, bowed us in as if we were somebody. We ambled into the main salon—which same is French for something—but you can search me.

The place was crowded with ladies dressed up in complete jewelry stores, who were lounging around developing their Morris chair muscles and listening to the orchestra play the sextet from “We Should Worry.” Here and there gentlemen who were down to their last million dollars roamed around, chasing playful flies off their chins, whiskers, and bald spots.

“Now, Doc,” buzzed Everready into my ear, “here’s where you’ll have a chance to ask the question of intelligent folks. Here you observe the backbone of the country. Look! See that young man over there, standing by the palm tree? There’s your chance; go over and toss ‘im the question.”

“What are you gonna do—see that I’m carried out O. K.?”

“Go ahead, Doc; if he molests you I’ll call an ambulance.”

Well, I first reviewed my nerve to see if it was in working condition, then measured the flipper from all sides before beginning my offensive. Far as I could see, the gent had been raised on strawberry shortcake and private tutors. His massive shoulders stretched a full foot from stem to stern, while his collar was so high that no doubt he was obliged to use a periscope to see where he was walking.

I judged that he weighed about ninety pounds Fahrenheit, and he wore his hair plastered over his huge forehead and left eyebrow as if he was doing it on a bet. I saw at once that if I couldn't handle that—er—chap I could be easily whipped by a myopic sunfish.

"Excuse me, colonel," I opened up on him, "but I'd like to—ah—ask you a question." At that the prize contribution to art flicked the ashes of his cigarette off onto my vest and looked as if he had been annoyed by a stray fly.

"I guess you didn't get me," I went on. "As I said before, I wouldst like to toss you a question. You see, colonel, I'm the reporter of the *Evening Yap-yanker*—I mean *Trombone*—and each and every day I ask a prominent citizen—"

At that point the bird lifted his eyebrows a few inches above sea level, deposited a few more ashes neatly over my necktie, and then made up his mind to make a speech. "Reahally," he drawled, "a fellow cawn't understand what youah talking about. Reahally! By the bye, have we—ah—been, properly introduced?"

"Oh," I mumbled, "I guess we ain't. Shake!" After which I stretched out my hand and clasped the air.

"I'd rawther not," he murmured as he played with his baby mustache. "Oblige me by toddling along."

"Listen!" I snapped, getting peeved below zero. "I'm the star reporter for the leading paper of the world, and I am here to ask you a question. See? Now, if you ain't got brains—"

"Oh, officer—officer!" He whistled to a husky bird a few yards away. "Please favor me by removing this nuisance, will you? Reahally, the man must be demented. He doesn't belong here, anyway."

The big bird flat-footed up and laid his ex-pugilistic paw upon my shoulder. "Who are you, hey?" he barked.

"I'm the Queen of Noah's Ark!" I fired back. "And tell that bird to loosen up and be a human being. For two cents I'd bounce—"

Well, to save time, I'll say at once and promptly that two seconds later I was resting neatly outside on the sidewalk. Just how the trick was performed I don't know, except that it was a success.

As I started to collect myself off the

pavement Everready eased out, smiling, and seemed to be highly pleased.

"Do I look like a slapstick vaudeville act?" I demanded as I removed a quarter's worth of peanut shells from my new suit. "I'm positively through with this interview stuff. See? I've been insulted inside out and outside in!"

"Never mind, Doc, old dear," he returned. "It wouldn't have happened had you used a little diplomacy. Now come along with father and I'll show you how to do it."

We pedaled along until we hit the Grand Central depot, which is the most interesting part of the city. It gives you a chance to ride out.

"Suppose we mooch into the waiting room, Doc, and try our luck? We'll meet all sorts of people there—bankers, brokers, song writers, editors, installment collectors—"

"I'd like to meet Little Rollo there, believe me! I'd tap 'im him for a high fly over the roof," I remarked.

"Ah—there's our man!" broke in Everready. "Look! See that grave-appearing man with the artistic hair and the hickory cane?"

"Do you mean the chaperino who's wearing his glasses behind his right ear?"

"Right. Although he doesn't look as if he were rich from his clothes, you never can tell; he's liable to be one of the city's most influential citizens. Now observe how I tackle him."

Everready two-stepped over as though he was walking for a cake down in Georgia, and beaned the old man with his famous smile. "I trust that you'll pardon this unheralded intrusion," he started off like a dictaphony, "but I'm on a mission that has to do with the asking of important questions of prominent New Yorkers."

The long-haired flipper gave Everready a quick glance, tossed his glasses from his ear to his nose with corking control, then stood as silent as six miles of the Black Forest.

"You see, sir," went on Everready, "I'm what is known as the Inquisitive Reporter for the *Trombone*. I presume that you understand, sir?"

At which the dear old boy put his hand to his right ear, pushed the flap forward, and said, "Hey?"

"He don't hear you, stupid!" I snapped to Everready. "Say it louder—louder!"

"I said," repeated Everready in a voice loud

enough to drown a picture-playhouse organ, “that I’m no less than the Inquisitive Reporter. Yeah—reporter! U-n-d-e-r-s-t-a-n-d?”

“Just a moment,” squeaked the victim. “I don’t hear as well as I useter.” His next act was to fish inside his coat pocket and extract about fifty dollars’ worth of machinery entitled Ear Horn. After juggling the same until he got it in the right place, he stuck it into his left ear.

“Telephone into the entrance!” I suggested to Everready. “Go ahead!”

“My dear sir,” he bellowed into the horn, “I’m asking prominent people a daily question. Understand? I represent the *Trombone* and I’m known as the Inquisitive Reporter and—”

Bang! The ear horn fell to the concrete floor and bounced clean over a couple of high hats. After which the old gent turned a few somersaults from rage, tossed his hat into the air, and his face got as red as a crate of tomatoes.

“You impostor!” howled the enraged one. “Since when are you the Inquisitive Reporter, hey? Since when? Look at me! Look at me! Behold—I’m the *Inquisitive Reporter!*”

#### CHAPTER IV. ANOTHER SURPRISE.

**L**ET’S blow—let’s blow!” snapped Everready, his face as white as the flour supply. “Cm’on, Doc! Somebody has put one over on us—somebody played us for a pair of boobs! Back to the hotel—quick!”

We raced out of that station at the rate of ten miles a minute, knocking over five porters and a couple of senators en route.

“You’re a wise bird—not!” I panted as soon as we reached the street. “You’ve been fooled so hard that it was pretty soft!”

“Doc, I’m puzzled three ways,” admitted Everready. “Why did that alleged reporter at the hotel frame us, hey? What was the idea? What was—Good night!” he suddenly yelled, feeling in his vest pocket. “My watch is gone!”

“So are your brains!” I snorted with much glee. “I can already see the whole plot. The bird at the hotel was a grade A sap-slammer, not a reporter. And the sap he slammed was Keen McCoy, the so-called well of wisdom. Excuse me

while I enjoy a laugh.”

“Doc, I’m afraid you’re right. I see it now myself. He snatched the watch while I spoke with him, that’s what he did. Oh, what a yap I am! Hurry—let’s get back to the hotel!”

When we dashed into the Gypdorf there was no sign of the Inquisitive Reporter, which was just as I had figured without any trouble at all.

“Let’s breeze up to the room, Doc; maybe I left the watch up there,” suggested Everready. “We’ll go up and see.”

We did. And the only watch we found there was the one painted on a calendar.

Everready slumped into a chair and looked as dejected as a harpooner after muffing a whale by a mile and a half. “Believe me, Doc,” he moaned, “we’re going to spend the rest of our lives searching for that burglar. The Inquisitive Reporter, hey? Bah! Take it from me—”

He got no further. The door bolted open and in breezed our old friend, the Inquisitive Reporter. Everready skidded off the chair with ease and astonishment. As for me, I collapsed against the bureau without the least effort.

“Greetings, gentlemen!” he beamed. “The clerk told me that I might come right up. How did you make out, may I ask? Did you collect the questions?”

“Mister,” replied Everready in even tones, “a bird with your nerve should be ahead of a circus. How do you do it? First you kid us into believing that you’re a bona-fide reporter for the *Trombone*, and then—”

“What do you mean?” fired back the nipper solemnly.

“I mean,” snapped Everready, “that I think you’re a pretty clever humbug; that’s what I mean! Furthermore, it might interest you to know that we accidentally bumped into the real Inquisitive Reporter! What have you to say to that?”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared the chap. “So Old Man Bucksmyth fooled you, eh? Haw, haw! It’s positively funny, really!”

“Whaddaya mean, fooled us?” demanded Everready, rising belligerently.

“Say something—quick!”

“Yeah—who’s Old Man Bucksmyth, hey?” I broke in.

“If you’ll calm yourselves, gentlemen,” went

on the bird, "I'll explain. Old Man Bucksmith, I regret to say, is—er—somewhat unbalanced mentally. Used to be a newspaper man. Well, for the past few weeks poor old Bucksmith has been imagining that he was the Inquisitive Reporter, and he's been pestering people with all sorts of odd questions. Of course, it's all rather embarrassing to us, you understand, but what can we do?"

"Say, listen, mister," blared Everready with much sarcasm in his tone, "I don't know now whether you're telling the truth, or a page out of the 'Arabian Nights.' But this much I do know—somebody swiped my watch! See? Somebody

lifted my watch!"

And then the surprise of the day snapped open the door and bounced into the room. It was no less than "Packey" Grippe, the bell hop, with his face wrinkled with dime-digging smiles, and a watch in his hand.

"Hello, Mr. McCoy!" he shouted at Everready. "Here's your watch. Saw it lying on the bureau this morning when I called to see if you were in. Just wanted to show it to my kid brother. Yeah—he's just from the country. Never saw one like it. It's a peach, ain't it? S'long!"

And that, ladies and gentlemen, concludes the performance.

## High Art

THEY had been discussing art, and the young man was getting tired of the subject.

"I remember one picture that brought tears to my eyes," he said.

"Ah, it was some pathetic subject," murmured his fair companion.

"As a matter of fact, I don't know what the subject was, but I happened to be sitting under a heavy picture when the cord broke, and it came down on my head."