



## THUBWAY THAM TUNES IN

By Johnston McCulley

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**S**OME men are born radio fans, some achieve radio fandom, and others have radio fanaticism thrust upon them. Thubway Tham, our young friend who gains sustenance and adventure by "lifting leathers" in the subway, belonged to the last class.

Owning a radio receiving set was about as far from Thubway Tham's thoughts as owning and operating a cattle ranch, until one evening when he was approached by Mr. "Nosey" Moore, the retired burglar who conducted the lodging house that Thubway Tham called home.

Upon this particular evening, Mr. Nosey Moore accosted Tham in his room, lighted a cigarette, hummed and hawed for a few minutes, and then came to the point of his visit. It seems that a certain burglar of reputation, Peter Panns, had allowed himself to be captured by the police under circumstances that made a trip "up the river" and a "long stretch in stir" a possibility of the near future.

But Peter Panns was of the sort that dies hard. So he had managed release on bail and was about to engage a noted criminal lawyer in an effort to escape incarceration. In New York City, as elsewhere, it may be mentioned, noted criminal lawyers do not labor for the love of it. Hence, Peter Panns was compelled to raise money, and lots of it.

During the days of affluence, Peter Panns had leased and furnished, in an elaborate manner, a bachelor apartment. And now, in his hour of need, he realized all that he could upon the furnishings.

All good crooks should rush to the aid of Peter Panns, said Nosey Moore. For instance, he had an excellent radio receiving set, and Tham should buy it.

So Thubway Tham, out of the goodness of his heart, and being in funds at the moment, purchased the radio set and installed it in his room. The first evening he played with it a bit. The second, in an unguarded moment, the radio bug bit him and allowed him to get Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and Cleveland. Whereupon, Thubway Tham promptly became a rabid radio fan and counted that evening lost when he did not tune in on a couple of new stations.

Tham had owned the set for a week, and the disease was in its height, when he happened to meet his ancient friend-enemy, Detective Craddock of headquarters, in Madison Square. Tham's conversation for the first ten minutes caused Craddock to smile.

"So you've got it, have you, old-timer?" the detective questioned. "You've got the radio bug. I won't have to worry much about your operations for a few days, Tham. You'll be turning the little dials and all that."

"Yeth?" Tham said in reply. "Don't you own a radio thet?"

"Certainly," Craddock responded. "I got one over a year ago. I tune in now and then, but I'll bet the dust is half an inch thick on the dials now. I was rabid myself, Tham, for a couple of months. It's a

tough disease.”

“Tho it ith a ditheathe, ith it?” Tham said. “Radio ith a great thing, Craddock.”

“I’m not disputing that fact.”

“It ith a meanth of entertainment for the thhut-in. It bringth to your own room the betht entertainment in the world. Without takin’ off your thlipperth and puttin’ on your thhoeth and goin’ out, a man can thit right in hith own home and enjoy himthelf.”

“What are you doing? Selling ‘em?” Craddock asked.

“No, thir! But you don’t want to make fun of a thing like that, Craddock. It may be the meanth of helpin’ you thometime when you leatht expect it. Look at how it helpth you thilly polithe! I tune in every night and hear the polithe alarmth.”

“It’s a great thing!” Craddock admitted. “Only I’m fed up on it. Are you thinking of taking a little ride in the subway today, Tham?”

“Pothibly,” Tham admitted, grinning.

“If you do, I’ll wager that some irate citizen will be reporting that a dip has taken his wallet.”

“It ith nothin’ in my young life what thome irate citithen reporth,” Tham replied. “If it wath not for foolith, irate citithenth makin’ thilly reporth, you dickth wouldn’t have anything to futh about.”

“One of these days—” Craddock commenced.

“Thtop it!” Thubway Tham implored. “That ith the thame old thong, and I’m fed up on that! One of thethe dayth you’ll catch me with the goodth and thend me up the river to do a long thtretch. Uh-huh! You have been tellin’ me that for thome little time now, Craddock. Wait till you do it! Craddock, ath a man I like you very much. I would go to the bat for you any time, Craddock. You are a dethent thort, and all that, and you’re my friend.”

“Tham! You overwhelm me!” Craddock said, with some sarcasm in his voice and manner.

“But ath a polithe offither, Craddock,” Thubway Tham continued, “you are leth than a two-thpot. In other wordth, Craddock, you ain’t in the deck at all!”

With that parting shot, Thubway Tham grinned and continued his walk through Madison Square. “Craddock ith a good old thcout!” he informed himself. “But if he ever did get me with the goodth, he’d thertainly take me in jutht ath if he didn’t know me at all.”

Being in funds, Thubway Tham did not have the inclination on this particular day to descend into the

subway and “work.” He attended a matinee at a vaudeville house, ate his dinner, and went home. For a time he held speech with Nosey Moore, and then he went up rickety stairs to his room. He hung up his coat in the big closet that connected his room with an unoccupied one adjoining, put on a house jacket and slippers, filled and lighted a pipe, and sat down before the radio set.

Even at that early hour there were plenty of stations “on the air.” Tham jumped from one to another, and finally stopped when he got the quality of music he desired. But he kept an eye on the little clock on his dresser; he wanted to be sure and “tune in” on a certain New York station at the proper moment and get the police alarms.

Sitting back in the easy-chair, Tham puffed at his pipe and enjoyed music being broadcast from Pittsburgh. And the serenity of the moment was broken by a pounding upon the door.

“Come in!” Tham commanded.

Nosey Moore entered at once, and behind him was another man. Tham knew him by sight and reputation. He was “Snoopy” Sallon, a crook somewhat disliked by other crooks, a man to whom truthfulness and honor were unknown even when dealing with his own kind. Tham quickly shut off the radio.

“Tham, we want help,” Moore said. “We’ve got to hide Snoopy until about midnight.”

“What theemth to be the trouble?” Tham wanted to know.

“The bulls are tryin’ to railroad me,” Snoopy Sallon declared. “They’ve been unable to pin a job on anybody and they’re pickin’ on me. They’ll frame me sure, Tham. If I can hide out until about one o’clock in the mornin’, a couple of friends of mine’ll meet me down on the corner and smuggle me to Jersey.”

“What thort of a job?” Tham asked,

“Loft robbery,” explained Snoopy Sallon. “I ain’t got any friends with dough, and I ain’t got dough of my own and can’t make a fight, and the bulls know it. They’ll railroad me for a stretch and go around braggin’ how they solved another case.”

“Thnoopy, are you tellin’ me the truth?” Thubway Tham demanded. “Are you thhure that you didn’t pull thome thtunt and get the bullth hot on your trail? I’m alwayth willin’ to help a man in trouble, Thnoopy, but I want to know all about it. I’ve got mythelf to think of.”

“It’s just like I told you,” Snoopy declared. “I

ain't done nothin', Tham. I ain't turned a trick, or tried to, for more'n a month. I've been layin' low."

Thubway Tham looked inquiringly at Nosey Moore.

"I thought," said Mr. Moore, "that you'd let Snoopy hide in that big closet, Tham. You'll be here playin' the radio. If the bulls bust in here, everything'll look natural. While you are talkin' to 'em, Snoopy can get from the closet to the other room and get down the stairs. If they bust into the other room, Snoopy can come from the closet, get through this room, and make a getaway. Then the bulls will come in and find you smokin' and playin' the radio like—"

"I thee!" Thubway interrupted. "I don't care much for you, Thnoopy, but I'm willin' to help a man in trouble." He got up and crossed the room and opened the closet door and beckoned to Snoopy Sallon.

The closet was a large one, and Tham had clothes hanging in it. The door opening from the closet into the next room was locked. Nosey Moore used a pass-key and unlocked it.

"You can thtay in there," Tham told Sallon. "I want to get back to the radio."

"Thanks, Tham!" Sallon said. "You're a square guy. I won't forget this!"

"I don't like to thee the dickth and bullth railroad any man," Tham announced. "That ith not right."

He closed the door and turned back into his own room with Nosey Moore.

"I don't like that bird, either," Mr. Moore whispered to Tham, "but we've got to help him make a getaway as long as he plays square. That's the game we're in, Tham."

"Thhure!" Tham responded. "Thtay a minute and lithten to thith muthic, Nothey."

Moore listened to the music for a time. Then the landlord returned to his office, and Tham listened in alone, and just about forgot Snoopy Sallon.

But presently he worked the dials again and "tuned in" on a local station. It was time for the police alarms.

Thubway Tham got a certain amount of pleasure out of those police alarms. He visualized thousands of persons listening to them. Tonight he listened while missing persons were described. He heard reports of stolen automobiles. And suddenly he sat up straight in his chair and forgot to puff at his pipe, for there was an alarm that seemed to interest

him more than the others. It rang from the loud speaker in such tones that everybody on that floor of the building must have heard it.

"Wanted," it said, "Snoopy Sallon, five feet, seven, weighs a hundred forty, thin, white face, looks like a dope fiend, little finger of left hand missing, scar over right eye, when last seen was dressed in well-known blue-serge suit and wore a black cap. This man, at five o'clock last evening, without provocation, fired at and wounded in the shoulder Detective Charles Craddock, of the headquarters squad. Presumably he did it in revenge because Detective Craddock once arrested him for burglary. This man Sallon is badly wanted by the police."

For a moment, Thubway Tham sat as though stunned. Craddock had been shot! Not mortally wounded, thank goodness, but shot just the same! Shot down without provocation. A cowardly act! And Snoopy Sallon, the man who had done it, was hiding in the closet by Tham's permission!

Snoopy Sallon had lied to Tham, too! He had said that the police were making an attempt to railroad him. He knew, undoubtedly, that Tham never would have aided him if Tham knew that he had shot Craddock.

Then it flashed through Tham's brain that Snoopy Sallon, hiding in the closet, must have heard that description of himself and his crime as it poured from the loud speaker. White with rage, his hands clenched, Thubway Tham sprang to his feet, rushed across the room, and jerked open the closet door to confront his man.

But he did not confront him. Sallon had heard. He knew in what estimation Tham held Craddock, and he expected violence for having lied. So Sallon had slipped from the closet to the empty room adjoining, had gone from there into the hall, and no doubt was hurrying from the lodging house.

Tham took down his coat and jerked it on, and reached for his cap. Something seemed to compel him to feel into his coat pockets. And then Thubway Tham did rage indeed. It had not been enough for this Snoopy Sallon to shoot down Tham's friend and then lie about it. Making his enforced departure, Snoopy Sallon also had taken the small roll of currency that Tham had in his coat pocket—some hundred and twenty dollars!

It has often been mentioned in these chronicles, that Thubway Tham generally was a mild little

man. But given a reason for wrath, none could be more wrathful. And Thubway Tham certainly had a double reason for wrath now.

He shut off the radio and darted down the stairs, where he found Mr. Moore.

"Nothey, that thkunk of a Thnoopy Thallon shot Craddock!" Tham cried. "I jutht got it over the radio. There ith a polithe alarm out for the thcoundrel. He heard it, too. And he thneaked away with all my money!"

"Why, the—" Moore began.

But Thubway Tham did not wait to hear him. He had run down to the street and was on his way. He imagined that Sallon would hide in some other place until midnight, the time for his trip over to Jersey. He knew a score of places where Sallon might hide—and he was out to find him.

Tham could inquire for his man and find the trail, whereas a police officer could not. As Tham fared forth on his quest, his face was white. He breathed deeply, and rage flamed in his eyes. Craddock was shot, and it was as though a brother had been brought down by an assassin's bullet. The wound was probably not at all dangerous, yet Craddock had endured pain! And the man who had done it also had robbed Tham.

In robbing a citizen of the underworld who was protecting him, Snoopy Sallon had put himself outside the pale. Now he was entitled to no consideration whatever! Tham could handle him the same as he would a stranger.

For some three hours, Tham went from place to place, but not a trace did he find of Sallon. However, he did not despair. He knew what he intended doing, and he told himself that he would do it if it took him years.

Sallon was the larger man, but he was weakened by drugs and he had a "yellow streak." Fortified with the knowledge that his cause was just, Tham would have twice his usual strength. But he had to find Sallon.

And then he entered a cigar store that had a billiard and pool room in the rear, a well-known hangout for crooks operated by a "fence." He whispered to the proprietor.

"I want to find Thnoopy Thallon," Tham said, "and I want to find him in a hurry."

"Uh-huh!" the other grunted. "I just got the tip a few minutes ago, Tham. The lay is that some pals are to smuggle Snoopy out of town, and he had to change his hideout. That's all I know about it. He's

afraid that his pals can't find him. What'd he do?"

"Plugged a dick," Tham replied, not mentioning names. "Hith goothe ith cooked unleth he watcheth hith thtep."

"All right, Tham. You pass the word to whoever it is that wants to know. Snoopy is hidin' on the third floor of Burke's place, down the street. Little room at the back."

"Thankth," said Tham. "I'll attend to it."

Tham exulted as he went forth into the street again. He hurried along it through the throngs. He knew where Burke's place was located, and he knew how to get to that little room on the third floor.

On the corner nearest his destination, Thubway Tham came across a detective who knew him. He halted and beckoned the man.

"You come with me, and you'll thee thome exthitement," Tham directed.

"What's up?" the suspicious officer asked.

"I'm goin' to turn over to you, if I can, a man who ith wanted at headquarterth."

"Go away!" the officer said, laughing. "What's the joke, Tham? You turn up a pal?"

"He ith no pal of mine! And it ith no joke—thertainly not for him!" Tham declared. "You jutht come along with me."

The detective obliged. Tham stopped at the entrance to Burke's place.

"You waith right here," he instructed.

"Want any help?"

"No, thir! I want to thay a few well-chothen worth to thith bird before I turn him over," said Tham. "You wait right here. It'll be worth waitin' for!"

Thubway Tham spoke the truth. This particular detective was a close friend of Craddock's. How he would love to get his hands on the man who had shot Craddock down!

Tham went up the rickety stairs and came to the little office on the second floor, where Burke, a brute of a man who was a character of the underworld, sat at a little desk. He nodded at Tham and grinned. He knew the little pickpocket well.

"Attaboy, Tham!" said Mr. Burke. "Goin' to pass up Nosey Moore and come here to live? I've got a dandy room on this floor—"

"Pothibly thome day, but not jutht now," Tham interrupted. "I come to thee Thnoopy Thallon. I have thertain worth for hith earth."

"Um!" said Mr. Burke. "Friend of his?"

“Not exactly,” said Tham.

“I sure hope not, Tham. I don’t like Snoopy any too well. I wouldn’t trust him as far as from here to the corner.”

“I wouldn’t trust him as far as I could throw a bull by his tale,” said Tham.

“But he’s in trouble, so I reckon we’ve got to help him,” Burke said. “He told me that he cracked a crib and that the dicks were hot on his trail.”

“Then he told you a lie!” Tham declared. “He thhot Detective Craddock for no reason whatever, just for thpite.”

“Shot Craddock, did he? Craddock’s the whitest dick on the force!”

“And I wath hidin’ him, not knowin’ what he had done, and when the radio told me, and he knew that I had heard it, he thneaked away. He thtole all my money when he went.”

“Why, the double-crossin’ skunk!” exclaimed Burke.

“Tho I am goin’ up and thee him,” said Tham. “And, Burke, if you are a friend of mine, I want you to put on your hat and take a little walk, tho you won’t be here to interfere.”

“That’s all right with me, Tham,” Burke replied, reaching for his hat. “Don’t wreck my place any more than you can help.”

Burke disappeared down the stairs. Thubway Tham ascended to the next floor, and there he went slowly along the hall until he came to the little room in the rear. No light was coming beneath the door, but Thubway Tham, listening intently, could hear a man breathing inside.

Suddenly, Tham knocked, and spoke immediately. “Hurry up! Thallon!”

He disguised his voice effectually, his rage aiding him to do that. Snoopy Sallon believed that his friends had found him. He unlocked and opened the door, and Thubway Tham thrust him backward and entered the little room.

“Quick! Turn on that light!” Tham snapped up.

Sallon obeyed before he realized what he was doing. He beheld confronting him a Thubway Tham he never had seen before, a Tham with indignation and rage blazing in his eyes. The yellow streak in the makeup of Snoopy Sallon predominated in that instant, and he retreated against the wall.

“You thkunk!” said Thubway Tham, the words mere rage-charged whispers. “You thhot Craddock—”

“I had to do it to make a getaway, Tham!”

“That ith a dirty lie! The polithe report thayth that you did it without provocation. And when you heard that come in over the radio you knew what I would do and thay, and tho you thneaked away. And you took my money!”

“I—I only borrowed it, Tham. I didn’t have a dollar on me, and I have to make a getaway. I meant to send it right back to you. If you want it—”

“You can bet that I want it!” Tham exploded. “You hand over that coin, and you do it mighty quick!”

Sallon fumbled quickly in his pockets and handed Tham a bundle of currency. “I broke a five gettin’ here in a taxi, Tham, but all the rest is there,” he said.

Tham pocketed the money, meanwhile not taking his eyes from the face of Snoopy Sallon. Then he buttoned his coat and advanced a step.

“You double-crothed me!” Tham complained. “You thhot Craddock! You thtole from me! Why, you thkunk—”

A certain amount of steam is good for a boiler, but too much spells disaster. Tham blew up!

His fists whirled through the air. He sprang. Those fists struck home. Snoopy Sallon, fighting in self-defense, imagined that there was a wildcat in the room. Tham was small, but wrath had made him powerful.

“There!” he said, as he smashed a fist into Sallon’s white face. “That ith for Craddock! And there! That ith becauthe you thtole from me. I’ll thhow you, you thimp!”

Sallon squealed and started to fight back. Under ordinary conditions, he undoubtedly would have won. But Tham was fighting the battle of the righteously indignant, and he had no mercy.

Back and forth across the room they fought, tipping over the table and the chairs. Now and then Tham smashed his man back against a wall and delivered a couple of blows before Sallon could evade him again. Sallon’s face became splotched with red. Great bruises already were standing out upon it. Tham battered it without cessation, sent in a few body blows by way of good measure, beat down his man until Sallon was crouched and whimpering in a corner, earnestly begging for an end of it.

“There, you double-crother!” Tham gasped out. “Put on your hat! Come with me, you pup!”

Sallon scarcely knew what was happening.

Tham crushed his hat down on his head, gripped him by an arm, and led him forth. He rushed Sallon down the first flight of stairs, thrust him through half a dozen lodgers standing there open-eyed and wondering, and hustled him on down toward the street.

"Double-croth me, will you!" Tham said in the victim's ear. "A dirty crook, you are! Thtal from me while I wath hidin' you! And thhot Craddock! Thhot a better man than you'll ever be even if he ith a dick! You double-crothin', bow-legged, knock-kneed, blind, deaf and dumb bunch of nothin'!"

Tham yanked his man down the remaining few steps and out upon the walk. The detective was waiting.

"Here he ith!" said Thubway Tham. "Here ith Thnoopy Thallon, the thcoundrel who thhot

Detective Craddock thith afternoon! Take him along, offither!"

"You can bet that I'll just do that little thing," the detective declared. And the manner in which he gripped Sallon's shoulder made that worthy wish that Thubway Tham was the man to have him in charge.

Then Tham adjusted his cravat, brushed the sleeves of his coat, dusted his hands, and tilted his cap to one side of his head. He glared at the curious ones who stood near at hand—and walked up the street. And as he walked he muttered speech to himself.

"Now I'll go to the hothpital and thee Craddock," Thubway Tham told himself. "And I'll tell him onthe more that the radio might help a man out when he leatht expecth it!"