

# THE SKIDS UNDER ELMER

BY SEWELL FORD

WAS I? Then I must have been thinkin' of Elmer. No, you wouldn't know him. His beat is up in the alarm clock and dollar watch zone. Not such a great ways off, either; but far enough from our white lights to keep him treadin' the straight and narrow. Runs a gen'ral store, Elmer does, and is postmaster, and local agent for the Neverpay Fire Insurance Co., and Great Sachem of the Red Men, and secretary of the County Grange.

And I expect the only time on record when Elmer's foot slipped was due to—say, you'd never guess. Pinckney? Uh-huh! Not planned, you understand, but just on account of— Well, I'll have to tell you how it was.

He drifts into the studio here the other noontime, Pinckney does, lookin' as new and snappy as if he was a sample sent out by some Fifth-ave. club to show what the spring models ought to be.

"Hello, chappy boy!" says I playful. "How they runnin' for you, eh?"

He flips the dust off a chair, hikes his creased trousers up another notch, fishes out his gold cigarette case thoughtful, and proceeds to tap one end of a dopestick on the edge of my desk. "Shorty," says he, "it's a foolish world, thank goodness!"

"Ah! you've been gazin' in the mirror," says I. "What seems foolisher'n common to you today?"

"My present perplexity," says he, "is of domestic origin. What is it one does, for instance, when the foolish steam heating apparatus goes 'Boom!' in the middle of the night, and your man tells you at breakfast that there's a denice of a mess in the cellar?"

"Why, you ring up the fool plumbers," says I, "and tell 'em to get busy."

"I know," says Pinckney. "Gertie's done all that, and they tell her it will be a couple of weeks before the foolish thing can be mended."

"That is sweet, ain't it?" says I. "But it's a simple matter to move into town and camp at some swell hotel for a fortnight."

"And you don't think it would look silly, then," says Pinckney, "bugging guests around that way? You see, we'd asked the Countess Colomni and her daughter out because they were jolly nice to us in Rome. They detest hotel life, and now if we—"

"Good point, Pinckney," says I. "Get any further, did you?"

"I'd considered staying where we are and having everyone wear fur coats. But that would be awkward, wouldn't it?"

"Specially durin' the soup course," says I.

"Quite true," says Pinckney. "And, as the Colonnis are used to Italian winters, perhaps they wouldn't like it. No, I must think of something else. By Jove! I have it!"

"You're kiddin'," says I. "Two ideas in one day? Let's hear!"

"We'll go around to the club for luncheon and ask some of the fellows," says he, jumpin' up. "Come along, Shorty!"

Could I miss any such strainin' of mighty intellects

as that? Not me! So we rings up a taxi and starts out to find help. Of course, Pinckney pikes straight for the café, where he discovers a blond haired, pie faced young Johnny gazin' pensive at an olive stranded in the bottom of a glass. Maybe he was reckonin' how much cocktail displacement the average olive has, or maybe his thoughts was sadder still. Anyway, he don't clirk up much at Pinckney's hail, or grow feverish when the crisis is sketched out for him. He blinks once or twice, jabs at the olive resentful with one finger, and all of a sudden unloads a chunk of wisdom.

"My dear fellow," says he, "why not take another house somewhere?"

"By Jove, Bertie!" says Pinckney, slappin' him on the back, "but I believe you've hit it, you know! Another house—somewhere! Why not; eh, Shorty?"

"But I thought these Colonnis was due to land out at your place tonight?" says I.

"But that gives me all the afternoon, doesn't it?" says he. "Now let's see who's in the grill."

There was quite a collection; but the one Pinckney steers for first is Tiddy Bates, a round faced, cheerful young gent, whose mission in life seems to be to wear the hottest neckties created and play carom billiards at a dollar a point.

"Take you on for a game," he suggests as we stroll up.

"Readly can't, old chap," says Pinckney. "I'm house hunting."

"Deuced deuce, you say!" remarks Tiddy. "Town or country?"

"Doesn't matter; anywhere," says Pinckney, droppin' into a chair careless and reachin' for the bottom.

"Then that's easy," observes Tiddy. "Let you have Hickory Sides,—sixteen rooms, four baths, private nine-hole golf course, whacking big fireplace in the living room, hot air furnace in the cellar, and—"

"I say, though," breaks in Pinckney, "does this hot air arrangement of yours ever go 'Boom!' and leave the house like a beasty icebox?"

"Simply can't, y'know," says Tiddy.

"Then I'm on," declares Pinckney. "What do I owe you for a month?"

"Oh, call it a hundred," says Tiddy. "No, I'll match you to see whether it's two hundred or nothing. Here you are. Now! Aha! Both heads! Two it is, my boy. But it's worth it. Great place, Hickory Sides. We had a bunch up there over New Year's. My word! I'll wire Mellick to air out and warm up. He's in charge, you know,—outside quarters, meets you at the station, and all that."

"Good!" says Pinckney. "Then that's all settled. But—er—by the way, Tiddy, where is Hickory Sides?"



Turns Loose Upon Him  
the Full Effect of Those  
Paris Trained Eyes.

"Connecticut," says Tiddy. "You take the Bay State Express and change at Naugatuck."

"I see," says Pinckney, makin' a note on his cuff. "Naugatuck. What's the matter, Shorty?"

"I like the name, that's all," says I. "Naugatuck! Sounds like a plea of not guilty to petty larceny, and ends so sudden and decided."

"But Hickory Sides is farther on, you know," says Tiddy. "Ripping when you get there, too; lots of room, inside and out."

"Then I'll make it a house party," puts in Pinckney. "That's it, a mid-Lent house party! Good idea—what?"

WELL, he was still pinnin' bouquets on himself when I left, and he's still cheery over it when he blows into the studio again about five o'clock to announce casual, "You're coming up tomorrow night, you know, Shorty, for the week end."

"Me?" says I. "I'd have to have a weak mind if I did." "Oh, but I've phoned Sadie," says he. "She's accepted."

"Then you win," says I. "Any other victims in the net?"

"I've been busy asking them for nearly an hour," says he. "Let's see, besides you and Sadie, there'll be the Countess and her daughter Vera, which makes four; Polly Ditson will be five,—she's always ready for anything, you know,—and then of course I had to hunt up Tucker Belmont, who's asked everywhere she is. He's six. Then at Sherry's I ran across Señor and Señora Del Riano, who—"

"Say, how many more do they make?" says I.

"Why, there's only the two of them, which is eight," says Pinckney. "They're on their way back to Mexico City from their wedding tour—she was Gladys Sangre, of Baltimore, you know; awfully good sort. And at the Waldorf I found little Prince Ranji Singh—"

"Eh?" says I. "Say, who's goin' to do the inter-pretin' for this bunch?"

"Pshaw!" says Pinckney. "Now I've missed my count! Nine, wasn't it? But Ranji's all right,—been to Oxford, and all that, and a perfect fiend for auction bridge. Hasn't recovered yet from the Durlar, he says, and a few days in the country will do him good. Nine, that's all, I think; though I may have asked others. We all go up together tonight. You're to come on the four o'clock tomorrow. And remember, change at Naugatuck."

"You can gamble I'll change to something there," says I, "even if I have to jump a freight."

And, as we'd been havin' a spell of mild weather, this scheme of Pinckney's for dodgin' the steam fitters didn't size up half so wild as it might. Course, collectin' a congress of nations ain't just my idea of a perfectly good house party; but I wa'n't kickin'. A day or so trampin' around through the real country might not be so bad for a change, specially with the weather holdin' like this.

BUT it didn't. It was gloomin' up some thick before I left town, and when I'd succeeded in gettin' past Naugatuck without barkin' my shins on any of the syla-



Prince Ranji Wasn't Up on Tobogganing.