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# LOVE AND LEARN

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H.C. WITWER

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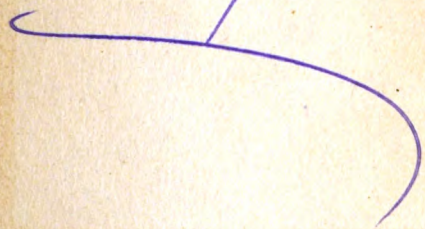


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Merry Xmas  
to George  
from Effie Glover

Dec. 25 - 1926









***By H. C. Witwer***

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**Fighting Blood  
The Leather Pushers  
Love and Learn**



# LOVE AND LEARN

THE STORY OF A TELEPHONE GIRL  
WHO LOVED NOT TOO WELL  
BUT WISELY

BY

H. C. WITWER

AUTHOR OF  
THE LEATHER PUSHERS,  
FIGHTING BLOOD,  
FIGHTING BACK, Etc.



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**by**

**H. C. Witwer**

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**(Cosmopolitan Magazine)**

**BY H. C. WITWER**

**The Leather Pushers  
Love and Learn**

**Fighting Blood  
Fighting Back**

**This edition is issued under arrangement with the publishers  
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To  
RAY LONG

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*"Thou hast the patience and the faith of Simeon!"*



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# LOVE AND LEARN

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# LOVE AND LEARN

## CHAPTER I

### SHERLOCK'S HOME

You know really I feel like Eve must have felt when she first opened her eyes in the Garden of Eden—I don't know where to begin! Julius De Haven, my permanent boy friend, claims it was fate that changed him from a gentleman of the chorus to the star part in a Broadway show. Julius is a former graduate of Harvard's college so he ought to know what everything's all about, but I can't give him nothing on *that* explanation. It wasn't fate that put him across, it was Gladys Murgatroyd, viz, *me!* That's not my real name, but it's a good one, isn't it? I thought so, too, when I composed it. There's a whole lot more stuff to it than there is to Mary Johnson, the name I was made a present of on my first birthday. Picture stars, actors, prize fighters, authors and people who write books have *nom de plumes*, so why shouldn't a tele-

phone operator have a *nom de switchboard* if she wants one?

Gladys Murgatroyd is the name I cook up for myself when I think I'm going to be another Gloria Swanson and goal 'em in the movies. That was after I win first, second and third prize in a beauty contest at my home town, Bountiful, Utah. As far as beauty contests are concerned, why, I figure I'd finish no worse than second in New York, if having the skin you love to touch and that school-girl complexion means anything. Anyways, being elected the best looker in Bountiful gets me a ticket to Los Angeles, but I fail to set the lake ablaze in the picture business. The best I can do for myself is \$5 a day as one of the supers in the super-productions and that soon gets more monotonous than monotonous itself. Being one of Solomon's wives today and a dashing young waitress tomorrow gets me kind of dizzy and Hollywood Boulevard is Bunk Avenue to *me*.

Well, I always was crazy to go to New York, having heard the town so well spoken of by one and all, so as soon as I saved the fare—a mere year—I check out of the movies and set sail for Broadway. I would like to say that I immediately land in a musical comedy and I *could* say it for that matter but it's a hobby of mine to tell the truth on the slightest provocation. What actually happens is that I get a portfolio as tele-



phone operator at the Hotel St. Moe. While I'm not one of the city's show places I'm getting attention and I bet I could step into the front row of the Follies without causing a laugh!

I guess you know that the telephone switchboard of a big hotel draws more Johns in a fiscal year than a park, a bathing beach, a stage door and a department store combined. These dumbbells have nerve enough to attempt selling celluloid collars in Hades and trying to get rid of 'em is like trying to get rid of double pneumonia! I've been invited to take a ride in every make of auto we both ever heard tell of and I get more lunch invitations daily than the Prince of Wales got when he visited our noble country.

All this thrills me like a drink of water would thrill a drowning man. I'm fed up on what the newspapers leniently calls "mashers," no fooling! Traveling and stationary salesmen, college boys, actors, ball players, bootleggers, lawyers, judges, doctors and what not, ranging in ages from eighteen to eighty, hang around the board all day trying to do themselves some good and as the result us girls take cruel and unusual punishment in habit-forming quantities during the course of the day's labors. Some of these beady-eyed, leering clowns stand there and look at you till you feel you're sitting there in your combination and you'd like to murder 'em! They never get nowhere with me or

with any girl that has an ounce of sense, because they hold these auto rides and lunches at too high a rate of exchange.

However, all work and no play is how to get a nervous breakdown, so sometimes I *do* pastime a little with the yearner sex. Every once in a while I meet one that I just can't resist taking apart to see what makes him go. Like Hurricane Sherlock, for instance.

Mons Hurricane Sherlock was a full-blooded prize fighter and light-heavyweight champion of our popular planet. This was my first experience in toying with gentlemen who make their coffee and cakes through assault and battery and what a shock *this* entry gave me—warm canine!

In round numbers, the way Hurricane Sherlock darkened my threshold was like thus:

Jerry Murphy is parked against the switchboard one morning, trying to do himself some good as usual. This master mind is the house detective at the St. Moe and a good scout, but he will never cause the world to forget Nick Carter when it comes to gumshoe work. They could shoplift the lobby of this trap and it would be weeks before the news reached Jerry, and in the lobby is where he stands. However, I can't help bestowing a grain of womanly sympathy on this great big meaningless blah, because he really thinks I'm the clam's overshoes and I never give him a tumble.

Anyways, he comes over this day and tells me to give room 1584 a bell. After a minute I pulled out the plug and informed Jerry there was no answer.

"Then I'll just bound up and give 'at baby's cave a frisk!" remarks Jerry. "His name's Bartlett—know him?"

"Bartlett?" I says. "No, I don't know him personally, but I've eaten a lot of his pears."

"What d'ye mean you have eat his pears?" asks Jerry, the picture of stupidity. "I don't make you."

"And you never will make me!" I says sweetly. "What has this Mr. Bartlett done which forces you to search his belongings?"

"Say!" says Jerry, snubbing my question while his face brightens up like a full moon, which is what it greatly resembles, "I got you now about this Bartlett and them pears. Ha, ha, ha, 'at's one for the book! You have eat a lot of Bartlett's pears, hey? I'll spring that nifty on the night clerk and——"

"And you'll get it all balled up and ask him does he know Mister Sickle," I interrupt. "I'm still waiting to hear what this pear manufacturer done."

"Oh!" says Jerry. "Why, he's got them bellhops run ragged gettin' him Scotch from the corner drug store and if I find over a case in his room I got orders to check him out. He's thirstier than them two Enforcement guys we had here. As Doc Coeey would

say, every day in every way he's gettin' wetter and wetter!"

At this critical minute a husky voice rumbles over Jerry's shoulder :

"Kin a man make a phone call here when youse people gits done kiddin' each other?"

I straighten up haughtier than haughty itself, prepared to give this noisy newcomer frostbite with a single glance, and Jerry swings around with a growl. Then an odd thing happens. The manslaughter disappears from Jerry's eyes with comical and magical speed and is replaced by a look of awe. A nervous grin appears on his shaky lips and all of a sudden Jeremiah has no longer got a florid complexion. If I wasn't acquainted with Jerry I would think he was scared. As I *am* acquainted with him, I *knew* he was scared.

"'At's—'at's Hurricane Sherlock, the light-heavy-weight champ," he says to me in a hoarse whisper, bending over the switchboard. "I—I guess I'll go and see this guy Bartlett about them, now, lemons of his!"

Exit Jerry.

"Who's that dizzy clown?" sneers the stranger and bends over himself for a good look at me.

I returned his glance with usurious interest and noted with pride that in two seconds flat he was attempting the difficult feat of swallowing his Adam's apple and his face was flushed a dull red. That shows

me I have lost none of my potency as a pulse-quickener, and with *that* all settled I take stock of my opponent. I see a tall, nobbily dressed young fellow with shoulders like a set of walking beams and a whimsical quirk to his lip, a la Dick Barthelmess. Later, I found out that whimsical quirk was placed there by one Rough House Trainor, who used a right hook for the purpose. However, I have seen worse lookers than Hurricane Sherlock, though I've never hunted for any.

But prize fighters are about as thrilling to me as a lesson in swimming would be to a middle-aged goldfish, so I quickly snapped into it. I didn't care for the gentleman's approach and there is nobody going to push *me* around, whether they're light-heavyweight champion or dark-heavyweight champion!

"Did you wish a number?" I ask, as cold as a winter's night in dear old Siberia.

Mr. Hurricane Sherlock comes to earth with a start.

"Wam!" he says, half to himself and the other half to me. "What a disturbance *you* are! Where have I been all your life, good lookin'?"

"If you think that line will get you anything here, you're crazy!" I remark, and on each word is an iceberg so large it would be a menace to navigation. "What number do you want me to give you?"

"Well, let's start with your address," says Hurricane Sherlock, with the goofiest of grins.

"Be yourself, big boy!" I says, getting a bit steamed. "I'm busy. I have no time to play with you. If you don't behave yourself, I'll call the house detective and have you put out!"

"Lady," says my adversary, "you can't have *me* put out! I ain't never been put out in my life. I ain't never even been knocked off my feet!"

"Yes, yes—go on!" I says, merrily working my plugs. "And where are the jewels now?"

Hurricane Sherlock looks puzzled for a instant and then he grins.

"Say, you're quite a kidder, ain't you?" he says. "Well, I ain't no dumb Isaac either, get me? I'm Hurricane Sherlock—does *that* mean anything to you?"

"Not a thing!" I says deliberately. "I don't know whether you're a traffic cop or Vice-president of Chili. Do you wish to make a call or don't you?"

"I'll make that call in good time," says Hurricane, "and don't tell *me* you never heard of me. I'm light-heavyweight champ of the world!"

"That's your own fault," I says. "Sorry, but I can't use you."

Hurricane Sherlock stares at me like he thinks both his kind of cumbersome ears have commenced lying to him.

"You don't wish no part of *me*—the world's cham-

peen?" he says in amazement. "Say, Cutey, don't be cheatin' yourself! D'ye know I clicked off a hundred thousand smackers in the ring last year?"

"The place to go with that information is the income tax collector," I says. "Why bother *me* with your business troubles? I have quite a collection of phone numbers here, can I sell you one?"

"Yeah, gimme a pink one," grins Hurricane Sherlock. "And listen, kid—me and you is goin' to see a lot of each other, so you might as well start right in gettin' used to me. I ain't a bad guy when they treat me right—when they don't treat me right, I'm poison. Now give Worth 86753 a bell and make it snappy!"

Honest, I'm so overcome with this fellow's nerve that I can't think of a comeback! I just nodded him to a booth and got him the number. He talked about five minutes to his manager. I know it was his manager because I passed up at least four much more spicier phone conversations to listen in on him. When he come out he tossed a dollar on the switchboard.

"Keep the change and buy yourself a railroad," he says. "I'll be back again tonight and we'll talk about this and that!"

If nerve was money, Hurricane Sherlock would of made Rockefeller look like a public charge, now wouldn't he?

From then on it was a case of try and keep the



world's champion light-heavyweight away from my switchboard. I treated him with about the same courtesy a ferret shows to a mouse, but if you think that bothered Hurricane you're crazy! He was what you call insult-proof and sarcasm rolled off his good natured smile like rain off a mallard's back. He soon became as permanent as the East River and he was just about as exciting to *me*. Furthermore, he murdered all competition, because none of these lobby hounds which ordinarily moored at my board all day trying to promote themselves had any desire to get in a jam with a gentleman who made his living by being light-heavyweight champion of the world.

Well, as the days went by and Hurricane Sherlock continued to hang around me like a tent, I get a new angle on him. I see that while he may not mean anything in *my* young life, he's plenty important to others.

Prominent people such as heavy business men, high-powered actors, bankers, lawyers, osteopaths and bootleggers who stop at my switchboard to try and get phone calls, look on the light-heavyweight champion with open fascination. Some of them kind of timidly say, "Good afternoon, Hurricane," and when he grudgingly returns a careless nod, why, honest, they almost swoon with joy. Aren't men funny?

But that isn't the half of it. The other girls on the board make no mystery of the fact that they would be

more than willing to trade off their sweeties for my great big husky boy friend. A lot of good vamping was showered on Hurricane Sherlock—and wasted, because he had eyes and words for nobody but me. The bellhops, clerks, elevator boys, porters, in fact all the help at the St. Moe give Hurricane attention that would of flattered Julius Cæsar, and they tell me there was a fellow who liked applause. All my box fighting friend has got to do is crook a finger and he gets all the service there is on tap in our hostelry. The funny part of it is that Hurricane Sherlock isn't even stopping at the hotel—he's merely stopping at my switchboard.

And the questions they ask me when they get me away from him! “Did he say anything about his scuffle with Kid Fisher?” “Is he really going to give the Frenchman a chance at his title?” “Ask him is he going to fight Young McWagon?”

All this and many more, till they got me dizzy, no fooling! Even the hard-boiled Jerry Murphy, generally annoyingly jealous of every male who throws me a glance, treats Hurricane Sherlock with respectful admiration.

Then I begin to sit up and pay attention to myself. No matter what you may have heard to the opposite, I'm human. Also, I was lonely. This attention Hurricane Sherlock was getting from the mob commences

to make an impression on me, in spite of my honest attempts to throw it off. I find myself reasoning that Hurricane Sherlock is not just a fighter, *he's a world's champion* and that's hard to dismiss with a laugh!

Likewise, Hurricane was far from difficult to gaze at, if you forgot that his nose was the least bit out of true and one of his ears could do with a little overhauling.

Don't get the idea that I was beginning to stumble in love with this large fellow, because I wasn't, though I was the next thing to positive that he was double cuckoo over *me*. But I was getting tired of going to the movies by myself or just sitting home wishing every night I was off duty. So I finally gave in to Hurricane's pleadings and accepted his urgent invitation to see him fight another highbrow entitled "12-Punch" O'Bernstein.

*Oo la la*, I will recall *that* evening for quite a space! To start with, I had never acted as a witness to a prize fight before in all my young life and you can imagine that I looked forward to this one with plenty excitement. Just what to wear at this carnival of aggravated assault was a problem which gave me no little trouble. I didn't know whether an evening gown or sport clothes were in order and the suggestions made by the jealous ones on the switchboard with me were only comical and not useful. Just what I *did* wear I don't remember

now, you'll have to ask someone who saw me. People who see me usually remember *everything* about me, if you know what I mean.

Hurricane made me a present of two seats in a ring-side box.

"Who are you goin' to take with you, kid?" he asks.

"I don't know," I says thoughtfully, thinking how Jerry Murphy would like to see this fight with me. "Why—does it make any difference who my escort is?"

"No difference at all," says Hurricane grimly. "No difference at all—as long as it ain't a man. Because should you take a *man* with you, why, they will be a strange guy tryin' to kid his way past St. Peter the next mornin,' that's all!"

So I took the hint and Hazel Killian, my girl friend.

Well, this brawl was lovely and brutal while it lasted, but then six minutes isn't very long. It took Hurricane Sherlock just two boisterous rounds to smite 12-Punch O'Bernstein "for a loop," as Hurricane put it, and a pleasant time was had by all—with the exception of Mons O'Bernstein and Hazel Killian. It was really a beastly evening for both of them! In the second round, Hurricane Sherlock broke his tête-à-tête's ankle with a punch on the jaw and Hazel fainted when Hurricane's nose persisted in bleeding all over everything as the net results of Mons O'Bernstein's earnest efforts before he was executed. Personally, I enjoyed

my first prize fight thoroughly, which I hope isn't unladylike. But really, I got quite a thrill when Hurricane waved his glove to me as he left the ring amid the thundering cheers of the big crowd.

Anyhow, Hurricane Sherlock and I got much better acquainted after that evening and one day at lunch he told me the story of his life. I simply can't understand why every man I meet is unable to prevent himself from giving me his unsolicited biography about the third time we see each other, but nevertheless, they do. Honest, it makes me feel like a jury!

However, this day my usually cheerful cave man was all gloomed up. I asked him what was the matter, expecting a non-committal reply, and then I was going to ask him something else. I never got a chance to ask him nothing else for the best part of an hour, as his answer to my first question took that long to pass a given point. I was the given point. Try and keep awake and I'll tell you what he told me.

It seems Hurricane had just returned from a voyage to his boyhood home, East Silo, N. Y., and the visit had practically ruined him. When he was a tot there he was the town joke and they all shoved him around till at the mellow age of sixteen he leaped a freight and left East Silo prostrate on its back. Hurricane's modest plans were to conquer the world and then come back and make East Silo like it.

Well, Hurricane made good! After various ups and downs he renounced the frivolous pleasures of the world and entered the prize ring. He didn't get the nickname "Hurricane" because he was timid, and the first thing you know he had hauled off and won the world's light-heavyweight championship. Hardly a day slips over the horizon that his name isn't in the newspapers, he takes in around a hundred thousand milreis a year, he has offers to fight in London at the National Sporting Club—where the Prince of Wales will shake his hand after he bounces some English heavyweight—and thousands turn out to cheer him every time he fights. In a word, Hurricane Sherlock has done his stuff and he *means* something!

So back he goes to East Silo, the old home town, figuring that the brass band, the mayor and a welcoming committee of important citizens would joyfully greet him at the station. He expected, and he had a right to expect, that a holiday would be declared, Main Street would be a mass of flags and bunting and speeches would flow like water.

No such thing! Nobody turned a hair when Hurricane Sherlock blew into town. They didn't give him a rumble. Boxing and boxers mean nothing to the natives of East Silo and the older citizens who remembered him told him he ought to be ashamed of himself going around hitting people and why don't he go

to work? The village blacksmith stood out from under the spreading chestnut tree long enough to offer the thoroughly enraged Hurricane a job at twenty dollars a week and found. And Hurricane Sherlock is world's light-heavyweight champion. As they say on Tenth Avenue, fawncy that!

What Hurricane wants to do, he explains as the waiter brings on the nourishment, is to pull off some stunt that will make the citizenry of East Silo realize just what he means in the world of art and science. He craves to do something to show 'em that a world's champion boxer is of more importance in civilized communities where they read the newspapers than arms are important to a jockey. In other words, what can Hurricane Sherlock do to knock East Silo for a row of Patagonian milk cans?

While I am mulling over the above apple sauce, Hurricane carefully cuts off the best part of the steak for himself and sadly remarks that what he has told me is only about half of his woes. I says to save the other half for our next conclave, and thus encouraged Hurricane goes right on with his funeral dirge.

It seems his own folks don't understand him either. When he first began to make important money, he tells me, delivering the last of the hash-browned potatoes to his own plate, he brought his people on to New York and set them up in a home in the Bronx

which would make Nero's palace look like a deserted barn.

Hurricane dwells on this home as well as in it—he furnished me with the prices on everything connected with it from the furnace to the roofing. Considerable residence, as he describes it, and one a millionaire should be tickled to get his mail at, but still Hurricane's folks pick on him. Like the East Silo knockers, they think prize fighting is out of order and that Hurricane should go into business, now that he's got \$4.75 for every wave in Tampa Bay. The way *they* look at it, he could buy a garage, or a chain of orangeade stands or start an opposition elevated railroad or something, but he most certainly should get out of the ring and become a solid businessman. Until he does, even his own folks are off him and he hasn't seen 'em for months, he wound up.

"Don't tell me any more, you'll have me crying my eyes out," I says, toying with a yawn. "Why unload all this on poor little me?"

Hurricane Sherlock gulps a couple of times and leans over the table.

"I'll tell you why I'm givin' you the lowdown on matters," he says, as serious as a fire in a powder mill. "I been catchin' your stuff at that telephone switchboard for weeks now, and believe me, kid, you're the buffalo's beard! The nifties you toss at them he-flap-



pers which tries to make you, the wise cracks you pull day in and day out—well, all that sells me the idea that if anybody can help me, you're the baby. I'm just a big dumbbell which don't know nothin' at all except how to keep 'em from gettin' up off the canvas, but *you* pack more brains than they ever *seen* at Yale, get me? Won't you please be a pal and help me knock them yokels up in East Silo for a trip?"

Honest, I have to smile, he's so earnest. He seems to be hanging on my answer like it means life and liberty to him. There's something pathetic about this big kid sitting opposite me, who has money and fame and merely wants his home town to admit it. I'm no Miss Fix-it, but the idea of helping another member of the male sex solve a puzzle fascinates me. But Hurricane's getting restless.

"Are you goin' to throw me down?" he asks anxiously, for all the world like an eight-year-old kid asking mamma for marble money.

"No," I says suddenly. "I'm not! I'll think this over and you drop into the St. Moe in a couple of days. I feel sure I'll have cooked up a scheme by that time which will make East Silo act like you're Napoleon the next time you enter the portals of the town!"

"You're immense!" says Hurricane. "Put me acrost in that slab and you can write your own ticket on what I'll do for *you*!"

So far Hurricane had kept in line whenever we were out together. What I mean is, he never even mentioned the preposition "love." That's a thing for which I was thankful. I sympathized with Hurricane and could take him as a friend—but that's all!

Well, when Hurricane Sherlock next appeared on the scene I was all set for him. I had given his case plenty of due consideration and I think I had the answer.

"Have they ever seen you fight in East Silo, Hurricane?" I ask him.

"No," says Hurricane. "Them hicks ain't saw a scuffle since the Civil War!"

"Great!" I says, and I'm really overjoyed, for now I know Hurricane's problem is childishly easy. In fact, it's no problem at all.

"Hurricane," I continue, "they have laughed you off in East Silo because they haven't got the proper angle on you. If they could only see you knock out an opponent and hear the frenzied cheers as you leave the ring, they'd go crazy over you and crazy over themselves for having turned out such a product as you in East Silo!"

Hurricane Sherlock looks pensive.

"That's a good thought, Cutey," he says finally. "But it's also a plain case of no can do. They don't allow boxin' in East Silo."

That slows me up for a minute—but only for a minute.

“Where do you fight next?” I ask him.

“Madison Square Garden, on the fifteenth,” says Hurricane. “I’m supposed to step fifteen frames with a boloney by the name of Ignorant Eddie Biff. I’ll smack him dead in a round!”

“Good!” I says. “Now, what you want to do is to make up a party of, say, twenty-five of the most influential citizens of East Silo. Get the mayor, the big banker, the political boss and people like that. Pay all their expenses to New York and back and get them ringside boxes at the fight. When they see you knock out this Mr. Biff and hear that crowd go wild over you, they’ll realize that maybe Lincoln was a great man in his day, but *you* are the man for the ages now!”

I wound up as enthusiastic as a three-headed cat in a creamery, but Hurricane shakes his head doubtfully.

“They may be somethin’ to that layout of yours, kid,” he says, “but what you are losin’ track of is the fact that it would set me back about a grand to bring them jobbies down from East Silo to see me step with this Ignorant Eddie Biff. I wouldn’t spend a thousand bucks on them babies if it was a felony not to do it!”

“Very well,” I says scornfully. “Then I hereby officially wash my hands of you and your troubles. Figure things out in your own way, I’m through! You

poor fish, you should be willing to spend a *million* dollars if it will set you right in your home town. What's a mere thousand to you?"

"My right eye!" says Hurricane.

But he interrupts before I get a chance to bear down on him.

"If you actually think that bringin' them saps down to see me work will do me some good, I'll bring 'em down," he says. "Anything you say is kayo with me, kid, unless you tell me good by!"

Which is as near as Hurricane had yet come to making love to me.

Well, the large night finally arrives when Hurricane Sherlock is to massacre Ignorant Eddie Biff for the edification of his former townsmen of East Silo, N. Y. Among those present was me, of course, at Hurricane's urgent invitation. He had scrupulously attended to the details of my plan to make him a big fellow in his home town. I instructed him to have twenty-five representative citizens of East Silo at the ringside—Hurricane had *fifty!* I looked 'em over with interest, having no trouble in picking 'em out. They couldn't of made *me* believe they had come from anywheres else but East Silo if they swore different on a stack of—phone books.

The noisy crowd, the glare of the lights, the gory preliminary bouts and the general atmosphere of sup-

pressed excitement—all brand new to the delegation from Hurricane's home town—gets under their skins a bit. But they're still openly skeptical of the importance of Hurricane Sherlock. Sitting behind 'em, I get *that* from snatches of their conversation, none of which is complimentary to the light-heavyweight champion of the world.

Promptly at ten P.M. Hurricane Sherlock climbs through the ropes to change all that.

A wild burst of applause greets my boy friend and I gaze at the jury from East Silo, prepared to see them clapping their hands off and beaming with civic pride. Instead of that, their hands are idle at their sides and there's a sneer on each and every face. While Ignorant Eddie Biff is hopping through the ropes to the accompaniment of a dead silence, I remember that it must of cost Hurricane a thousand dollars to bring these ten-minute eggs down from East Silo to see him ruin Eddie, but I figure that it will be a bargain if it puts him over in his home town. Then I sit back to enjoy the fracas.

The bell rang for the first round and amid a hush of expectancy Hurricane Sherlock danced lightly out from his corner with a contemptuous sneer for his plainly nervous vis-à-vis. Hurricane then peered through the tobacco smoke drifting over the ropes like he's looking for somebody. Finally, his gaze rested on my excited

face and he brightened up. Evidently I was who he was looking for. I fluttered my handkerchief, Hurricane turns his head and waves back a careless glove to me. As his head turned Ignorant Eddie Biff darted forward with the spring of a panther, smashed his right glove against Hurricane's chin, and—*the fight was over!*

Hurricane Sherlock, light-heavyweight champion of the world, has been knocked out with a single punch! Not only that, but *he has spent a thousand dollars to bring his enemies down from East Silo to see it!*

*O sole mia!*

Well, for a minute the big crowd just sat there dazed. They couldn't seem to put any faith in what their bulging eyes showed them—Hurricane Sherlock prostrate on the floor as cold as a winter breeze, five seconds after the bell for the first round. Whoever in that vast audience blinked an eye didn't see the fight at all!

Then with a roar like Niagara Mr. Pandemonium took charge and the panic was on. The cash customers who paid to see a long hard battle are fit to be tied and they yell their heads off with rage. Hundreds who had bet on Hurricane Sherlock become maniacs. They had nothing on me! Look at the terrible thing I have done to the now ex-light-heavyweight champion. By waving my handkerchief at him I got him knocked

out, and by trying to help him I have brought his worst enemies there to see it!

Assisted by a couple of cops I managed to fight my way out a side exit to a taxi and I'm whisked home to spend a horrible sleepless night. All I can think of is what plans Hurricane Sherlock will make with regard to *my* disposal when he recovers from the sleeping sickness on that canvas. I certainly have gummed things up for your life and I don't mind telling you that I'm scared stiff!

I spent a lot of time the next morning arguing with myself as to whether or not I'd better stay away from the Hotel St. Moe till Hurricane Sherlock forgot what I had innocently did to him. But then I thought if I stayed away till he forgot *that* I'd have to stay away 200 years, so I decided I might as well go in, face him and be done with it. So that's what I did.

That morning was a fearful one for me, honestly it was! Every time I'd look up I'd expect to see Hurricane Sherlock towering over the board with first degree murder in each eye. The phone service at the St. Moe is at no time nothing to boast of, no more than it is in any other hotel, but *that* morning even my warmest admirers meowed about the way I treated their innocent requests for numbers. It was really a case of try and get a sensible answer from me, that's all!

Well, up till noon my unfortunate knight had not put in an appearance and I'm commencing to breathe normally again. As I'm going out to lunch I'm thinking is it possible that poor Hurricane is still slumbering on the floor of that ring from that horrible blow Ignorant Eddie Biff presented him with?

At that moment my heart stops beating for one terrible second. I have bumped square into Hurricane Sherlock in the lobby of the hotel!

Honestly, I'm almost hysterical with pure fright and I gazed wildly around for assistance. I'm really afraid Hurricane may do me bodily harm! But to my dumb-founded astonishment, he's smiling and looks happier than happy itself. I feel I must say *something* or I'll scream, so I begin to stammer condolences. Still smiling happily, Hurricane cuts me off.

"That kayo was the best thing could of happened to me, kid," he says cheerily. "I would of got it sooner or later anyways—they all do. I don't care nothin' no more about what them yokels from East Silo thinks about me, either. What does them sapolios know? Say—up in that slab they think alligator pears will bite you!"

"I—I'm afraid I'll have to hurry on," I says, crazy to get away. "I'm going to lunch and I must be back in——"

"That punch last night knocked me out of the ring



into a swell taxi business and now I'm all jake with my folks," goes on Hurricane calmly. "You're goin' to eat, hey? Well, come on up to my home and chow with us. My folks will be crazy to see you—I told 'em plenty about *you*, kid!"

I tried to duck this invitation, but no chance. So to avoid attracting undue attention by an argument in the crowded lobby, I got into a taxi with Hurricane Sherlock, bound for his home. In view of what had just happened, I felt I owed him *something!*

All the way up in the cab Hurricane raved about what a swell family he has, but to tell you the truth I scarcely heard him. I had just about decided that Mr. Hurricane Sherlock has lost his attraction for me, now that he's no longer a champion—which had really been the only thing thrilling about him to me. What's bothering me is how to break the sad news to him. I am picturing in my mind the scene which is going to take place in his home. He's taking me up to meet his folks, undoubtedly wanting his dear old father and mother to see the lady of his choice and get their O. K. before he asks me will I quit the telephone switchboard to accept a position as his bride.

Honestly, I felt awfully sorry for him. I know it's going to be terribly tragic. He might even break down and cry like a baby when he sees all his plans go to smash. But I can't help it—Hurricane Sherlock is *out*

as far as I'm concerned. Why, I wouldn't dream of marrying him!

Well, we arrive at Sherlock's home. Hurricane asks me to wait in the parlor till he brings in his folks. The coming ordeal has got me so nervous that I've just about bitten my nails away. While he's in the next room I rehearse to myself the way I'll break the news to him. "I'm very sorry, Mister Sherlock," I'm going to say, kindly, "but I never thought of you in *that* way. I can't marry you, but——"

Just then Hurricane bounces into the room, half dragging a kind of plain-faced young lady who has two very dirty-faced kids hanging to her apron.

"Meet the wife!" grins Hurricane to me. "And the rest of my folks. Hey, Joey and Goldie, say hello to the lady!"

## CHAPTER II

### WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN TOWER

A HUNDRED and fifty years ago, the late Mr. Samuel Johnson yawned, picked up his pen, jabbed it in the nearest inkwell and dashed off the following nifty:

*“No man but a blockhead ever wrote except for money!”*

Now, really, with plenty of due respect for the deceased, I'm compelled to remark that in my opinion the above wise crack is the ant's smoking jacket. I admit that I have yet to stumble across a writer who made it a habit never to take any doubloons for his stuff, but I *do* know a milk-fed author who says it with plays and who doesn't give a good gosh darn whether he gets pennies for 'em or not, as long as he gets his concoctions produced with his name on 'em. This entry, Guy Austin Tower, is an incurable addict of that habit-forming drug, Fame, and he'd rather have three cheers than three dollars. Oh, yes, I forgot to mention that

he's also a full-blooded millionaire and that *does* make a difference, now doesn't it?

Mr. Tower's first play is still running on Broadway and if it isn't a success then neither is Henry Ford. Getting a seat in Heaven and getting a seat in the show shop where Mr. Tower's riot is on view are two feats of equal difficulty, and judging by the lines outside the box office there's the same number of people trying to get into both places. I have a season pass—to the theater, not Heaven—and can go as often as I can stand it. That's very nice, but what I *should* be clicking off is a large slice of the weekly loot, because if it hadn't been for *me* there wouldn't have been any play!

At the time Mr. Tower crossed my path I had just finished reading a story entitled "When Knighthood Was in Flower" by Charles Major, and really Charley manipulated a wicked set of writing implements, no fooling! Often I'd close my eyes over that book at the switchboard and imagine I was living in the romantic days of old like the kind Charles wrote about and then I'd gaze around at the leering lounge lizards and smirking lobby hounds who jam the gorgeous corridors of the St. Moe—hunting in packs like the wolves they are!—and believe me, I'd come back to earth with a thump! Many and many a time I've wished *I* had been current when gleaming blades flashed

in the sun for a lady's smile and when a perfumed glove, tossed from a balcony, was ample to start a revolution, a duel, an empire or a scandal. But now that's all as out of order as a suit of white ducks would be in a coal mine. These days, men start wars for dollars and fight for women with the same weapons!

Well, I was in this silly, sentimental frame of mind when along came Mr. Tower.

The meeting was very scenario. I overslept one morning and being afraid I'd be late at the mill I blew myself to a taxi. About halfway to the St. Moe, the motor quit like a dog and after my fearful looking chauffeur had leisurely potted around it and tried without luck to start it with curses alone, I impatiently commanded him to get me another and less shopworn bus. Time and tide not only waits for no man, but it waits for no woman either and I was frantic to get on the job.

"Hey, quit that hollerin' at me!" says the chauffeur politely. "I'm doin' the best I kin, ain't I? I'll git you downtown in good time. They seems to be somethin' the matter with the carburetor, but I ain't sure if——"

"You're a fine automobile mechanic!" I interrupt, with equal courtesy. "I bet you think a wrist pin is jewelry. It's taken you nearly fifteen minutes to go three miles!"

“Who d’ye wish to drive you for a buck and a half —Barney Oldfield?” he sneers.

“Listen!” I says. “Save that cross-fire patter for the garage. Call me a taxi with a motor in it and make it snappy!”

The chauffeur scowls at me.

“You certainly like to arg, don’t you?” he says. “All right, I’ll git you a cab. Gimme the one fifty what’s on the clock for haulin’ you this far.”

I reached in my hand bag and then, honestly, I thought I’d swoon! In my mad rush to get out of my apartment and down to the hotel I had forgotten my purse—can you imagine that?

“I—it seems I have left my money at home,” I began to stammer, my face as red as his ungainly nose. “If you——”

“Apple sauce!” butts in this charming gentleman of the old school. “Don’t try to kid *me*, cutey. That stuff might git you by in them out of town slabs, but *I* was born and dragged up on Second Avenoo and I have met you gypers before! I wouldn’t care if you was so good lookin’ you’d make a goldfish forgit to keep openin’ and closin’ its mouth, I’m blonde-proof. You don’t shove off from here till I git my jack and that’s that!”

Ain’t we got fun?

Well, an interested knot of innocent bystanders be-

gins to rally round us and this modern Sir Galahad squawks his head off till, really, I never was so mortified since I first tried roller skating. I have met some hard-boiled citizens in tripping gaily along life's promenade, but Mr. Taxi Driver was a china egg if there ever was one! No give to him at all and the more I pleaded with him the more abusive he became and the more the shipping clerks, bootleggers, pickpockets and floorwalkers on their way to business seemed to enjoy it. Honestly, it was horrible!

At this critical moment along comes Mr. Guy Austin Tower, Esq., in his costly imported horseless carriage, built along racing lines to hold two people—if they're kind of affectionate friends. Mr. Tower leaps lightly and gracefully out of his car, shoulders his way to my taxi and raises his cap with the air of two Valentinos.

"As I live!" he remarks with a bright smile. "The Goddess of the Switchboard! May I be of service?"

Not even his mother will ever be any gladder to see him than *I* was right then! I remembered him instantly as my wealthy admirer who is parked in the royal suite on the tenth floor of the St. Moe—two hundred dollars the day, but then you get a lovely view of Central Park.

I made him a present of the smile that had no little to do with me winning that Utah beauty contest,

and reading the immediate effect in his eyes I felt more at ease right away.

"Thank you!" I says. "I left my purse at home and——"

"Blah!" the taxi apache shuts me off. "What d'ye wanna tell this cake-eater that stuff for? Ask him to slip you the buck and a half you owe me, he looks dizzy enough to fall for it!"

Mr. Tower certainly was light on his feet for a big man and he acted promptly, as all first-class knights do. His arm shot out from his shoulder and down flopped friend chauffeur as if he'd been shot through the heart! A round of applause went up from the delighted spectators, just as a burly policeman pushed his way through the throng.

The cop looks at me and I'm trembling with fear, he stares curiously at the prostrate chauffeur who won't be any more still when he's dead, he gazes around at the grinning witnesses, and then he turns to the flushed Mr. Tower, who's standing there blowing softly on his skinned knuckles.

"Hey, what's all the excitement here, heh?" growls the gendarme.

Mr. Tower smiles cheerfully and pats John Law on the arm.

"Eh—just taking a movie!" he says pleasantly.

"Move along and give these people a chanct to see



what they're doin'!" bawls the cop to the laughing crowd as Mr. Tower hands me into his car with so much grace that I could close my eyes and see him standing there in silken doublet and hose and hear him say, "I prithee, fair lady, wouldst step in yon equipage?"

I don't know what the name of Mr. Tower's car was, but I think it must have been a Leaping Tuna from the way it carried on when we hit bumps and crossings en route to the St. Moe. I promised to go to dinner with him at my earliest convenience, too, because by this time I was up to my neck in romance and I thought my millionaire cavalier was the gnat's bathrobe!

Enter Robert Meacham Westover, playwright number two.

Robert was writing dramas for such producers as the Shuberts, A. H. Woods, Dillingham, Savage, Brady, Morosco and Lederer. He wrote for them all, yet unfortunately none of them gave his plays a tumble. Like Mr. Tower, Robert was young and comely, but he was also an incurable pauper and the other girls on the board liked him and carbolic the same way. Really, he was a fearful pest, hanging around the switchboard all day and asking over and over again, "Are you *sure* there were no calls for me today?" or "There *must* have been a phone call for me

—I have a play being considered by Klaw and Erlanger, and—” etc. But there were no more calls for Robert Meacham Westover than there are calls for hot water bags in Hades!

Personally, I was very sorry for Robert, who looked like he never had a good time in his life. Every day and in every way he kept getting thinner and thinner, till he resembled a model for a “Help the Starving Kanakas!” poster, or something similar, honestly! I knew he didn’t have a dime in the wide wide world and I often wondered how he managed to live. I even had a hazy idea of taking him out and feeding him some day as a simple act of charity, but of course a girl has to be careful mothering strange young men in New York—or anywhere else, for that matter. Look at the jam Eve got herself into by feeding Adam that apple!

It was Jerry Murphy who made up my mind for me regarding Robert. One day Jerry loomed up over the board just as Robert Meacham Westover had walked away.

“What’s ’at clown pesterin’ you about now?” growls Jerry, jerking a pudgy thumb over his shoulder at Robert’s threadbare back.

“Are you my father?” I says, haughtily working the plugs.

“No,” admits Jerry, “but they’s a movie by ’at name

right across the street. Listen, has 'at guy Westover been annoyin' you?"

"No," I says. "*You* do all that! What right have *you* got to question me about my friends? Run along and play, when I wish your services I'll whistle. Go on, shoo—you're on a busy wire!"

"Somebody must of put in a rap for me," says Jerry mournfully. "Seems to me you're *always* busy when I give you a bell, but 'at Westover mug can buzz you all day long and make you like it! He's been tryin' to promote you now since——"

"That's out!" I shut him off. "Don't get out of line, Jerry, or I won't let you talk to me at all. Besides, I don't believe Mr. Westover is even interested in women—he's too busy writing plays."

"Blah!" snorts Jerry scornfully. "Show me a guy which can't get no kick out of *you* and I'll show you a place in the East River where it's nothing but consommé! If 'at scissor-billed boloney ever tries to make a date with you I'll lay him like a carpet. I'm goin' to bear down on him anyways. He gets checked out of this trap tonight, or else——"

"Or else he don't!" I finish for him. "Look here, Jerry, I don't need a guardian and if you ever start a disturbance around here on *my* account I'll make you so sorry you'll sob yourself sick! Understand?"

"Don't get red-headed," says Jerry soothingly. "I

ain't goin' to cuff him, but I got orders to *pinch* him. Laugh *that* off!"

"Arrest Mr. Westover?" I says, and I'm so startled I gave two people their right numbers. "What for?"

"He's got a hobby of not payin' his rent," says Jerry. "The big stiff! So he writes plays, hey? Well, six months on the island ought to give him plenty ideas for his next comedy!"

Then I saw Jerry was serious, so *I* got serious, too. Somehow the idea of this starving kid being thrown in the Bastille didn't appeal to me. No matter what anybody says, I have never believed that a writer does his best work when the world's against him. Why, six months in a cell might ruin that boy's entire future and prevent the world from meeting another Avery Hopwood! So I manage to smile and flirt Jerry Murphy into keeping his hands off Robert Meacham Westover till I had interviewed the young man and got a line on where, if anywhere, he expected to turn for some pieces of eight.

That very night as I was going out to dinner I ran across Robert standing in front of the big plate glass window of the Café les Enfants, watching the chef juggling wheat cakes. Some of the numbing chill of New York's regard for a loser has crept into the air itself and Robert's coat collar is turned up, his hands

are in his pockets, and in his eyes, glued on the golden brown wheat cakes, is a look of longing such as probably Cleopatra saw when Mark Antony first gave her the up and down. Just saying it was pathetic is not doing the scene justice. He started, kind of guilty, when he pegged me, but I grabbed his arm.

"Greetings!" I says smilingly. "Speaking of Lake Erie, come on, I'm going to feed you!"

Yes, men can blush.

"Why—I—why—eh—really, I'm not hungry," he stammers, but how his eyes did glint at the mention of food! "I——"

But by this time I have crowded him inside and seated him at a table, where his protests got weaker and weaker. One glance at the line of march and he simply ordered everything on it and a pot of coffee. However, he insisted upon paying for his dinner and mine—borrowing ten dollars from me for this worthy purpose. Robert carefully marked down the loan on the back of a letter rejecting one of his plays, with the solemn promise that when his first drama was accepted he would repay me about two thousand percent. Tomato sauce! I waited till he had finished giving his one man banquet a beating and then I took him in hand.

"What's the idea of storing yourself in the best hotel in Gotham when you have no visible and ap-

parently no invisible means of support?" I ask him, over the cheese and crackers.

Robert turns a rosy red.

"I imagine that *must* look a bit odd," he says. "But allow me to call your attention to the fact that I'm occupying the cheapest room in the—eh—hostelry, and I must have a good address to get even casual attention from the theatrical producers."

"Listen," I says quietly. "As long as you have failed to set the lake ablaze as a playwright, are in debt and have no more idea than a rabbit where you're going to promote any money, why not forget about the hard hearted theatrical producers and go to work?"

Robert's knife clatters to the table and his mouth opens wide. In his eyes is a look of genuine amazement. Then he smiles.

"You're joking," he says calmly.

I gaze at him, coolly sitting there eating the food I have paid for and grinning at the idea of earning his living, and honestly I get burnt up!

"You see something comical in the idea of getting a job?" I ask him, in a kind of strained voice.

"Naturally!" he answers, packing some more cheese on a cracker. "My dear girl, I wouldn't even know how to go about it! What would I do, for instance?"

"What would you do?" I says angrily. "Why, *anything!* Drive a truck, dig streets, sell books, learn

a trade of some kind or enlist on the police force! Get up early in the morning, study the want ads and then lay out a route for yourself, taking the first job that's offered you! Why——"

"I'm afraid you don't understand," butts in Robert, with coldly raised eyebrows. "I'm an artist—not a laborer!"

"I wouldn't brag about it!" I says. "Do you mean to say you have never done a day's work in your life?"

"I was at one time engaged in the work of bringing men's and women's attention to the fact that this life is not eternal—that death must come to us all!" says Robert. "And——"

"You were a minister?" I interrupt, full of surprise.

"No," says Robert. "An insurance agent."

Well, we sat there and argued till I was plenty late when I went back to my board. Honestly, I rode Mr. Robert Meacham Westover to a fare-thee-well in an attempt to make him snap into it. He broke out with an attack of temperament and angry words flew back and forth like swallows, till finally he threw up his hands and promised me faithfully that if his latest masterpiece, "An Illegal Crime," wasn't accepted within a week he'd return to the respectable science of selling life insurance, as he was doing when what he called the "divine afflatus" knocked him for a loop.

The very next day Robert gave me a copy of "An Illegal Crime" to read and I took it home with me when I went off duty that night. I must admit I didn't expect to get much of a kick out of it, but I thought I'd at least glance through it, so that when Robert cross-examined me about this drama, I'd know how many acts was in it, if nothing else.

Well, really, I don't know when I got such a surprise! From the minute I started to read "An Illegal Crime" I simply couldn't lay it down, and it was nearly four A.M. when I turned out the light at the indignant request of Hazel Killian. I had read every word of Robert's play and some of it twice, and if it wasn't a knockout then I'm Queen of Sheba!

Two days later I kept my dinner engagement with Guy Austin Tower.

If I'd been going to get married I couldn't have donated more time to dolling myself up than I did on the day of this date. The first thing I did was to phone Mr. Williams, manager of the St. Moe, another male who fancies himself highly. If I had a dollar for every time this dizzy dumbbell has tried to take me out, he'd never be in a position to invite me again! I told him I was sick and couldn't report and he says I should try Doc Cooley's system, because all ills are only imaginary. So I sweetly said that in that case he could imagine I was there and then I hung up. My next move is to



drop in at a beauty parlor and let the skilled labor there have a field day. I had my hair waved, my nails done, my classic features massaged, sat for a troubled hour with my face caked in mud, etc., etc., and even etc. When I came out I was all in, but I was also a success!

I had exactly *one* evening gown. Buying it swept away my lifetime savings and made Hazel hysterical laughing at what she called my maniacal extravagance. I didn't consider getting this dear of a dress was extravagance! Looking at it, wearing it, even *touching* it, gave me more joy than I can tell you. I just *loved* it. If I had a million dollars I'd have \$975,000 worth of clothes! This one was pink satin covered with crystals, wrapped tightly around the figure towards the front, where the draperies fastened with large ornaments of silver leaves and buds. It was a rather daring gown and not everybody could wear it, but I didn't win that beauty contest because the judges were nearsighted!

Mr. Tower called for me at seven and the look he gave me as his face changed color when I opened the door repaid me with illegal interest for my preparations. In dinner clothes, he was very restful to the eye himself. In fact, the openly envious Hazel thought my knight had stepped right off the screen and she told me later she got such a reaction that she deliberately

broke a date with a boy poet from Greenwich Village and went out with a dashing young peddler of automobiles instead, simply because the latter sheik had a pleasing habit of wearing a tuxedo of nights.

Well, Mr. Tower and I had dinner at Jonquin's, the Polo Grounds of the restaurant league, and he seemed as proud of me as if he'd won me at golf. We talked about this and we talked about that and then, of course, the conversation got personal. I soon found out that Mr. Tower, who had nothing but money, was as temperamental as Mr. Westover, who had nothing but nerve. My millionaire is dissatisfied with things in general. Although his father left him about everything but South Dakota when he died, Mr. Tower says he wants to make good—that is, he craves fame. A moment afterwards when he confesses that he's an author and playwright, I nearly choked.

"What's the matter?" he asks me anxiously.

"Nothing," I says. "I—well, I seem to be in the midst of an epidemic of writers! I had dinner with one only the other day, Robert Meacham Westover. He lives at the St. Moe, too—do you know him?"

"No, I don't believe I do," says Mr. Tower thoughtfully. "But if his plays have been produced, I envy him!"

"Save your envy," I says. "What plays have you had produced, Mr. Tower?"

I started something.

"None!" he says, banging the table with his fist. "And I or any other unknown playwright never *will* have his work produced while conditions in the theatrical business remain as they are. Genius is strangled, sacrificed to the god of the box office! Originality is penalized and becomes a serious handicap—art is symbolized by the lady on the face of the dollar!"

"In other words, it's all wrong," I says, feeling I should say *something*.

"Exactly," says Mr. Tower. "How quick you are to grasp one's meaning and how wonderfully sympathetic!"

"It's a gift!" I says demurely. "Like being able to wiggle your ears or play the oboe."

"By Jove, that's clever!" says Mr. Tower. "I shall put that in my next story. Have I your permission?"

"Go right ahead," I says. "Don't hesitate to call on me at any time. So you write *stories*, too? I suppose you're what they call ambidextrous, aren't you?"

Mr. Tower throws back his head and laughs like a kid.

"Now you're joshing me!" he says, wagging a reproachful finger at me. "Write stories? My dear girl, under various nom de plumes I have submitted verse, essays, short and long stories, jokes, epigrams, plays and what not to producers and publishers, but

thus far I have failed to ring the bell. I have been told by competent authorities that my style and technic—the result of much study and training—leave nothing to be desired, but it appears that I lack that unusual imagination necessary to invent new and interesting plots. Perhaps that is because I have not seen enough of life in the raw—I have never actually experienced hunger, fear, envy; in fact, few, if any, of the standard emotions. There has been no necessity for me to feel them. My infernal wealth has been fatal to inspiration! Yet, by heaven, I *can* write, and some day I——”

“But with all your money, Mr. Tower,” I interrupt, “why not rent a theater and produce one of your own plays yourself, since all you really want is to see it on Broadway?”

“Yes, I *could* do that,” he tells me, “but that is not my desire. I want my work accepted by a disinterested producer, on its merits!”

“Fair enough!” I says, foiling a yawn in my throat. “Isn’t that waltz they’re playing delightful?”

Well, money had not prevented Mr. Tower from solving the mysteries of dancing, and really he glided a wicked ballroom. While we’re tripping the light fantastic, as they call it on Avenue A, I can’t seem to keep my mind off this queer situation in which the millionaire Mr. Tower and the starving Mr. Westover play the leading parts. The thing interests me strangely,

and having helped a prize fighter solve a similar problem, I can't see why I should be baffled by a couple of synthetic playwrights. Then in a flash the answer comes to me! I will have Mr. Tower buy "An Illegal Crime," which will put Mr. Westover on his feet and give him a stake for coffee and cakes while he writes other gems. In turn, Mr. Tower through his influence can have Mr. Westover's play produced *under his own name* and in that way gather the fame he craves, because I'm satisfied "An Illegal Crime" will slap Broadway for a row of parsley!

I'm so excited over my idea that I talk of nothing else to Mr. Tower all the way home in his car—this time it's a Boles-Joyce limousine, carrying a crew of two on the front seat. When we reached my bower, I ran up and got my copy of "An Illegal Crime" and gave it to Mr. Tower to read, together with my proposition to think over. He was very doubtful and far from sold on the idea. In fact, he seemed much more interested in getting a rough estimate from me on when he could play around with me again. I said let's get his future all fixed up and we'd speak of recreation later. He then told me I was wonderful and I told him good night.

The very first thing the next morning Mr. Tower called me on the switchboard and he's the height of enthusiasm over both "An Illegal Crime" and the idea

of buying it from Mr. Westover. Could I arrange a meeting? I said of course I could—and then it suddenly dawned on me that I hadn't yet mentioned a word of my scheme to Mr. Westover.

At first the highly astonished Robert couldn't see my proposition with a telescope and he most indignantly refused to have anything to do with it. What, allow his brain child to appear as the progeny of another? Never! He barked and meowed along these lines till I called his attention to the fact that he was broke, in debt, on the brink of being stretted from the St. Moe and had a six months' vacation in the hoosegow staring him in the face for not being able to pay his hotel bill. This made Robert thoughtful and he finally agreed with me that he who writes and makes it pay will live to write another play. He insisted, however, that he wouldn't take a nickel less than a thousand dollars for "An Illegal Crime." When Mr. Tower offered him \$7500 cash for it Robert nearly swooned, but he recovered in time to gurgle "Sold!" Then the gambling millionaire starts the rounds with the play.

Well, where poor Robert Meacham Westover had to be content with interviewing office boys and having stenographers pass on his play when *he* was peddling it, Mr. Tower was ushered right in to see the big theatrical moguls themselves. There's only one place on earth where a man who is able to write a check for a

million and get it cashed can't get attention and that place is called Nowhere. Sidney Rosenblum, the first producer Mr. Tower called on, looked greatly disappointed when the young money king declined to put up the sugar to produce the play or even to go fifty-fifty on it. Still, out of respect to Mr. Tower's bankroll, Rosenblum glanced carelessly over "An Illegal Crime." Mr. Tower told me afterwards that before Rosenblum had finished reading the first act he rang for his secretary and asked her to break out a contract!

Six weeks later the play was produced with Mr. Tower's name on it as author, and to the hysterical joy of Mr. Tower, me and Rosenblum, it turned out to be the success of the year. The critics went crazy and point-blankly accused Mr. Tower of having wrote the great American play. Honestly he was interviewed silly and his picture was plastered all over the papers—in other words, he was famous and his lifelong ambition was realized.

Then along comes the fly in the ointment and the fly's name was Robert Meacham Westover, the real author of "An Illegal Crime." When Robert sees what a knockout his drama has turned out to be and realizes that he has sold all his rights in it, he's fit to be tied, no fooling! He made quite a scene at the switchboard, blaming *me* as all men since the first one blame the man when anything goes wrong!

"I worked the best part of a year on that play," he almost sobs to me. "I starved and slaved in composing it, and now, by heaven, I have to *buy tickets* to see my masterpiece, with another's name on it as its author! It's driving me insane!"

"Well, why didn't you think of that when you sold your frolic?" I says, but I'm really a bit upset myself. "You took seventy-five hundred dollars for it and Mr. Tower took all the chances. Suppose it had been a flop, would you have given him back his money?"

"I'll give him back his paltry seventy-five hundred *now!*" raves Robert. "Why, 'An Illegal Crime' will make that in royalties within a few weeks. I'll *make* him take back his gold and return my play! It's my greatest effort and I demand the fame and prestige it will give me and which is my right. Oh, whatever possessed me to enter into such an indecent, immoral bargain—to sell the child of my brain! I may never again compose such a plot. I'll have to start all over again. I——"

"Be still!" I butt in. "You got everybody in the lobby looking at you! As long as I started this, I'll try and finish it. I'll talk this over with Mr. Tower today. Remember, I promise nothing, but I'll do my best!"

"Straighten this out and you will never regret it," says Robert frantically. "My career now rests in your pretty hands!"



Well, honestly, I was very sorry for Robert and the more I turned matters over in my troubled mind the more I began to see some justice in his stand. After all, it *was* his play that New York was wild over and it must have been horrible to have to see someone else get the credit. I hated myself for getting mixed up in his affairs at all, even though what I did was only done to help him. Then there was Mr. Tower's side to be considered, too. Hadn't he gambled his seventy-five hundred—just seven and a half times what Robert asked for "An Illegal Crime"? Mr. Tower had no way of knowing that the play would get over.

I just couldn't stand thinking about it any longer, so I went right to Mr. Tower and presented the case of Robert Meacham Westover to him. Mr. Tower, joyful as a lark, was busy autographing his pictures, dictating letters to admirers, signing contracts for movie rights and Lord knows what else. He was busier than Busy himself, and sitting pretty, and I just hated to be a crape-hanger!

Mr. Tower was smiling happily when I began my story, after he had told his secretary to step out, but before I got half finished he was pacing the floor and the smile was conspicuous by its absence. To say it was a shock would be a niggardly use of adjectives! He never expected anything like this to gum up his fun.

"This is terrible—*terrible!*" he says finally. "I

bought all rights to the infernal play from Westover, didn't I? Any court in the land will sustain my position. I'll give him all the royalties! I have no use for the money, I only want——"

"You only want the same thing Mr. Westover wants," I interrupt. "That's credit for writing the play! There's no use offering him money either, Mr. Tower, I know he wouldn't accept it, and of course if he sued you and won, he'd get all the royalties anyhow. He could have me dragged to court for a witness—and I'd have to tell the truth, wouldn't I?"

Again Mr. Tower nervously patrols the room. "Well, what shall I do—what would *you* do?" he asks me desperately.

"Mr. Tower," I says seriously, "if you're a *real* man, a true knight, such as I like to *think* you are, here's the chance of a lifetime to show your bigness, and you'll jump at it! There's only one thing to do and that's the honorable thing. Take back your money from Mr. Westover and we'll both make an affidavit that he, not you, wrote 'An Illegal Crime'."

Mr. Tower gave me a long, long look and I returned it, putting everything I had in my eyes. "It will please *you* if I do this?" he asks me soulfully.

"Very much," I answered promptly. "And it should please *you*, too!"

With a deep sigh Mr. Tower became a knight. He

called in his secretary and dictated a statement that caused the dumbfounded secretary's eyes to bulge. Then we got Mr. Westover, stopped at a notary public, and we all wrote our names on the dotted line. Mr. Westover signed with a flourish, but Mr. Tower's signature was shaky. Our next port of call was Sidney Rosenblum.

It goes without saying that Rosenblum was dazed when we had told him our little bedtime story, but he wasn't so dazed that he forgot to get his press agent busy on this new and sensational angle to the production of the play. There was little else in the newspapers the next morning, and, yes, my picture was there with the others. The thing burst like a bombshell on Broadway and the avalanche of publicity started "An Illegal Crime" on a two-year run on the Big Street alone. Robert Meacham Westover was made for life, of course. Why, he and this Rosenblum got \$80,000 for the movie rights! I could have entered the chorus of any musical show on Broadway as the result of my photos being incessantly printed and the general notoriety I drew out of it, and even Mr. Tower got the best of the big exposure. He was highly praised for his sportsmanship in acting like he did, when he was legally entitled to claim authorship of the play.

Well, success brought about a great change in Robert Meacham Westover, the boy playwright. It went right

to his head, where there was the most room! He moved from his cupboard under the roof to a classy suite in the most expensive part of the St. Moe and stalked through the lobby like he'd suddenly been appointed Duke of Diphtheria, or something. Instead of pestering me and the other girls about his imaginary phone calls as he did in days of yore, he now refused to talk to *anybody* over the phone.

However, he was grateful enough to *me*, who he swore put him over. He wanted me to go here and he wanted me to go there with him, but I couldn't use him and was ready and anxious to let him pass out of my life. Robert was too much in love with *himself* to really love anyone else, and when he asked me would I consider marrying him I told him I was afraid I couldn't get off duty to go to the church and they wouldn't stand for a wedding in the lobby.

"But I don't object to taking back the ten dollars I loaned you before you became the talk of New York," I says.

"Oh—I *beg* your pardon!" he stammers, getting red, and why shouldn't he? "I—I'd forgotten all about that—rushed to death—working on my new play, you know—that sort of thing——"

He pulls out a roll of bills that would strangle a hippo and makes a big display in the crowded lobby by thumbing them over a couple of times before counting

me out a hundred dollars in ten-dollar bills. He let everybody see him handing me that money—and that's the tip-off on him!

I took one ten and coldly told him to keep the rest for writing materials.

Guy Austin Tower rushed up to the switchboard a few days later to excitedly announce that he'd been commissioned to write a play by no less than Sidney Rosenblum himself. Rosenblum had sent for Mr. Tower and told him he saw no good reason why the publicity he'd just enjoyed shouldn't be made use of. He then made Mr. Tower repeat all the circumstances connected with the authorship of "An Illegal Crime." When my boy friend got finished with the sad tale, Rosenblum puffed thoughtfully at his cigar for a minute or two and remarked that in his opinion the story of how Mr. Tower had bought Mr. Westover's drama and then given it back to him would make a corking play itself!

Well, with a plot at last to mix with his fine writing, Mr. Tower tied in enthusiastically and wrote the play.

It opened six months ago—try to get in!

## CHAPTER III

### MONEY TO BURNS

*"When fortune favors a man too much, she makes him a fool!"*

Neither Napoleon, Nero, Alexander, Jack Johnson, Mark Antony nor Bill Hohenzollern was the composer of that remark, though, honestly, I bet they all *thought* it about the time the world was giving them the air. However, the boy who originally pulled the above wise crack was Mr. Publius Syrus, who was current in dear old Syria during the fiscal year of 77 B.C. Two thousand annums after Publius gave up the struggle, Jimmy Burns, a professional bellhop—age, twenty; color, white; nationality, Broadway-American—decided to find out for himself whether or not Pubby's statement was true.

It is!

One morning during a slight lull in the daily hostilities between me and the number-seeking guests, I am reading my favorite book—the *Morning Squawk*, the

newspaper that made the expression "It is alleged" famous, or maybe it was the other way around. Spattered all over the front page is a highly sensational account of the latest adventures of one of these modern prodigal sons—in round numbers, Carlton Van Ryker, whose father celebrated his ninety-fifth birthday by entering a tomb in a horizontal position and leaving his only progeny two paltry \$500,000 bank notes. The young millionaire with the name like a Pullman and a soft collar had been stepping high, wide and fast with his pennies and at the time of going to press was the plot of an "alienation of my wife's affections" suit, a badly mismanaged shooting affair, and various other things that would keep his mind off the weather for quite a spell. While I'm drinking all this in with my lustrous orbs, along comes Mons. James Joseph Aloysius Burns, who was either the hero of this episode in my exciting career, or else he wasn't.

"Kin you feature a cuckoo like this dizzy Van Ryker havin' all that sugar," he snorts, nodding angrily at the newspaper, "whilst us regular white folks is got to slave like Uncle Tom or we don't eat? Is that fair?"

"Cheer up, Jimmy," I says with a smile. "We don't get much money, that's a fact, but then we can laugh out loud. That's more than Van Ryker can do! Look at the pushing around he's getting because he hauled off and inherited a million, poor fellow; he——"

"That mug was runed by too much jack!" butts in Jimmy. "He's what you call a weak sister. He wasn't *built* to handle important money—you got to be *born* that way! Knowin' how to spend money is a gift. I got the gift, but I ain't got the money!"

"And you never *will* have the money, frittering away your life hopping bells in a hotel, Jamesy—not to give you a short answer," I says. "When they assembled you they left out the motor—*ambition!*"

"Blah!" says Jimmy courteously. "That's what *you* think. I got plenty ambition. My ambition is to wake up every morning for the rest of my life with a twenty dollar bill in my kick! Believe me, Cutey, I often wish I was a Wall Street bond messenger, a bootlegger or even a professional reformer—but I ain't never had a shot at no *big* dough like that. Why, if it was rainin' tomato bouillon, I'd be there with a knife instead of a spoon!"

"As if *that* would stop you!" I remark sweetly. I once saw James eat. "It seems to me you're always craving excitement," I went on, dealing out some wrong numbers. "Only last week you told me you had a massage."

"Go ahead and kid me," says Jimmy. "*You* should bite your nails—you're a woman, a good looker with more curves than a scenic railway, and they ain't no way *you* kin lose! But it's different *here*. It seems



to me I been workin' for a livin' since the doc says 'It's a boy!' and the chances is I'll be workin' for a livin' till the doc says 'Get the embalmer'!"

Don't you love that?

"Why don't you check out of the bellhopping game and try your luck at something with a future in it?" I ask him, though, really, I'm about as interested in Jimmy's biography as I am in the election returns at Tokio. "If *I* was a man, this town wouldn't have *me* licked!"

"Apple sauce!" sneers Jimmy politely. "A guy without money has got the same chance in New York as a ferryboat salesman would have on the Sara Desert. It takes jack to make jack. With a bank roll I could make *my* name as well known as Jonah's, and I'd spot him his whale!"

"What do you *do* with your nickels?" I ask him. "I don't doubt that Chaplin and Fairbanks get more *wages* than you bellboys, but I thought your *tips* ran into better figures than they have in the Follies."

"Say, Cutey, be yourself!" says James scornfully. "Most of the eggs in this trap is as tight as the skin on a grape—they wouldn't give a thin dime to see Tut-ankh-Amen walk up Fifth Avenoo on his hands! I could be railroaded to Sing Sing for what I think of *them* babies. Why should *I* have to carry suitcases and hustle ice water for a lot of monkeys like that?"

"Don't put on dog, Jimmy," I smile. "The guests of the St. Moe are every bit as good as you are, even if you *are* a haughty bellhop and they are lowly millionaires. Suppose *you* had a million, what would you do with it?"

"Well," says Jimmy thoughtfully, "the first thing I'd do wouldst be to get me a education—not that I'm no dumb Isaac by no means, but they's a few lessons like algeometry, matriculation, mock geography and the like which I could use. *I* wouldn't get all tangled up with no wild women or pull none of the raw stuff which this Van Ryker jobbie done, that's a cinch! They'd be no horseplay what the so ever, as far as *I* was concerned. What *I'd* do wouldst be to crash into some business, make my pile and my name and not do no playin' around till I was about fifty and independent for life. Ain't it a crime when I got them kind of intentions to make good and no nonsense about it, that somebody don't slip me a million?"

"It's an outrage, Jimmy," I agree, allowing a giggle to break jail. "Still, all men are born equal and if it's actually possible that you *haven't* got a million, why, you must have thrown your chances away. When Eddie Windsor was your age, for instance, he had made himself Prince of Wales!"

"Me and him begin life in a different type of cradle!" says Jimmy. "And that stuff about everybody bein'

equal when they're born is the oyster's ice skates. The only way me and them wealthy millionaires was even is that we was all babies!"

This debate between me and Jimmy was about like Adam and a monkey arguing over which of 'em was our first ancestor—we could have found plenty of people to side with both of us. Then again, the customers was beginning to snap into it for the day and craved the voice with the smile. I got as busy at the switchboard as a custard pie salesman on a movie comedy lot, so I gave the money-mad James the air for the time being.

A couple of weeks later, or maybe it was a jolly old fortnight, Hon. Guy Austin Tower returns from a voyage to Europe, and then the fun began!

Guy would be a face card in any deck—he's a real fellow, no fooling. Even the parboiled Jimmy Burns, who thinks everybody guilty till proved innocent, is one of Guy's fans. Guy just sprays Jimmy and the rest of the hired help with princely tips and doesn't dime them to death as most of the other inmates do.

Well, Guy got a welcome from the St. Moe staff that would have tickled a political boss. Honestly, he brought something back for everybody! What he brought back for *me* was some perfectly gorgeous Venetian lace and his sixty-fifth request that I re-

nounce the frivolous pleasures of the telephone switchboard and enter matrimony.

I accepted the lace, which drove Hazel Killian wild with envy, but on the wedding bells I claimed exemption. I liked Guy, but I was by no means in love with him—or with anyone else! From what I'd been able to observe from my perch at the St. Moe switchboard, there was a bit too much "moan" in matrimony, really!

I meet five hundred representatives of the sillier sex every day, and treat 'em all with equal chilly politeness till they get out of line. Then I turn off the politeness, just giving 'em the chill, and honest, when I want to be cold—which is generally—I'd turn a four-alarm fire into an iceberg with a glance!

Well, Guy Tower hadn't been back in the St. Moe a week when he began showering attentions on me from the point where he left off before he sailed away. Honestly, he dined and theatered me silly! Hazel watched me carelessly toy with this good-looking young gold mine with unconcealed feelings of covetousness. She simply couldn't understand why I didn't grab this boon from Heaven and marry him while he was stupefied with my charms. Hazel is no eyesore herself and suffered from a lifelong ambition to become a bird in a gilded cage. She craved a millionaire, and in desperation she offered to match coins with me for Guy, but I indignantly refused. I *know* Hazel—she's

a dear, but she'd have Rockefeller penniless in a month and every shop on Fifth Avenue sporting a "Closed to Restock" sign. She's just a pretty baby who loves to go buy buy and she makes 'em give till it hurts, don't think she doesn't!

Another person who got upset over Guy's inability to keep away from me was Jerry Murphy. My bounding around with Guy fills Jerry with pain and alarm and he keeps me supplied with laughs by constantly warning me of the pitfalls and temptations that surround a little telephone girl who steps out with a millionaire.

"If 'at big mock orange makes one out of the way crack to you, Cutey, just tip me off, and I'll *ruin* him!" says Jerry with a menacing growl. "I can't cuddle up to the idea of you goin' out with him all the time. Don't let him go to work and lure you somewheres away from easy callin' distance of help!"

"Cut yourself a piece of cake!" I says. "Mister Tower is a perfect gentleman, Jerry, and it would be impossible for him to act like anything else if he and I were alone on an island in the middle of the Pacific."

"Say, listen, Cutey," says Jerry, wincing, "don't mention 'at alone on a' island stuff in *my* presence! 'At's what I been dreamin' about me and you for a year. If we ever get on a ship together, I'll wreck it as sure as you're born!"

Now, wasn't he a scream?

Well, at one of our dinner dates about a month after his return, Guy shows up haggard and wan and apparently all in. Generally a fellow who couldn't do enough for his stomach, he ordered this night with the enthusiasm of a steak fiend week-ending at a vegetarian friend's. When the nourishment arrived, Guy just dallied and toyed with it. Afterwards we favored the dance floor with a visit, and instead of tripping his usual wicked ballroom he acted like he had an anvil in each of his pumps. A dozen times during the evening he had to tap back a yawn, and really I began to get steamed up. I'm not used to seeing my boy friends pass out on me!

"I hope I'm not keeping you awake, Mr. Tower," I remarked frigidly as we returned to our table and the nineteenth yawn slipped right through his fingers, in spite of his well meant attempt to push it back.

"Forgive me!" says Guy quickly, and a flush brings some color to his face for the first time that night. "I—the fact is, Gladys, I don't believe I've had a dozen hours' sleep in the past week!"

"Then you've been cheating," I smile, "for you've always left *me* around midnight. Is she a blonde or a brunette, or have you noticed?"

Guy laughs and, leaning over, pats my hand.

"As if I would ever notice *any* girl but you!" he

says, getting daringly original. "Oh, it isn't a girl, Gladys—though there *is* a woman at the bottom of the thing, at that. I'll explain that paradoxical statement. Rosenblum wants my next play to open his new Thalia Theater, which will be completed within two months—and I haven't the ghost of an idea, not the semblance of a plot! I've paced the floor like a caged animal, smoking countless cigarettes and drinking oceans of black coffee. I've written steadily for hours at a stretch and then torn the whole business up in disgust. That's what's kept me awake at night—that and my daily battles with this infernal Rosenblum!"

"How come?" I ask him in surprise. "I don't see the percentage in battling with the man who puts your plays on Broadway, Guy."

"He wants me to write a risqué farce, one of those loathsome—er—pardon me—bedroom things—for Yvette D'Lys," says Guy angrily, "and I ab-so-lute-ly will not do it! I refuse to prostitute my art for the sordid box office! I——"

"Hold everything!" I butt in. "Shakespeare wasn't below writing bedroom farces, and I think even *you'll* admit that he got some favorable mention as a playwright."

"Shakespeare write a bedroom farce!" gasps Guy. "Why, my dear girl, you—which of his marvelous plays could you *possibly* twist into that?"

"Othello," I says promptly. "In act five they clown all over the boudoir! You should go to the theater oftener."

For a second Guy looks puzzled, then he grins and the lines around his navy-blue eyes relax.

"You are delightful," he says. "If I cannot get mental stimulus from *you*, then I am indeed uninspired! Nevertheless, I am not going to do as Rosenblum requests. I have never written anything salacious or even suggestive, and I never will! Furthermore, I don't believe Miss D'Lys or *any* actress *likes* to play that kind of a part. It is managers of the Rosenblum type that force those rôles on them—callous, dollar-grabbing, cynical pessimists, who take it for granted that all women are bad!"

"Any man who takes it for granted that all women are bad is no pessimist, Guy," I says thoughtfully. "He's an optimist!"

"Great!" says Guy, slapping the table with his hand. "May I use that epigram in my play?"

"I'll loan it to you," I tell him. "If I break out with the writing rash myself some day, I'll want it back. And now let me hear some of the ideas you tore up in disgust—maybe one of them is the real McCoy. Trot 'em out and I'll give you my honest opinion."

Well, he did and I did. Guy rattled off a half-dozen plots, which failed to thicken and merely sickened.



Honestly, they had everything in 'em but the Battle of Gettysburg, and really they were fearful—about as new and exciting as a beef stew, which is just what I told him, being a truthful girl.

Guy sighs and looks desperate.

“Gladys,” he says, “I simply *must* have a play ready to open the Thalia in less than eight weeks! You know that my interest in playwriting is anything but mercenary—good heavens, I have more money than I know what to do with. What I want is to see my name on another Broadway success, and I’m absolutely barren of ideas! I’ve simply struck a dry spell, such as all writers do, occasionally. At this moment I’d give twenty-five thousand dollars for an original plot!”

I drew a deep breath and stared at him.

“Don’t kid about that kind of money, Guy,” I says solemnly. “And—don’t tempt me!”

“I never was more serious in my life!” he quickly assures me. “Why, have *you* an idea? By Jove, Gladys, if you *have*—if you are the goddess from the machine \_\_\_\_\_”

“Be of good cheer,” I interrupt. “I’ll go home and sleep over matters, which is what *you* better do, too—you look like you fell out of a well or something, really! I’ll see you tomorrow. I don’t think I’ll have a plot for you by then, but——”

“Naturally—still, if you even have a suggestion that I might use,” says Guy eagerly, “I——”

“I say I don’t *think* I’ll have a plot by then, I *know* I’ll have one!” I finish.

And I did, really!

When I got home that night I went right to bed, but somehow Mr. Slumber and me couldn’t seem to come to terms. My brain just refused to call it a union day but kept mulling over Guy and his magnanimous offer of twenty-five thousand lire for a plot. Good heavens, he could buy a plot with a house and barn on it for that! Then my half sleepy mind turns to Jimmy Burns, the gloomy bellhop, whose deathless ambition is to corral a fortune and dumfound Europe with his progress from then on. Suddenly these two trains of thought collide with a crash and out of the wreck comes an idea that I think will make Jimmy Burns famous and give Guy Tower his play! That trifling matter being all settled, I turned over and slept the sleep of the just.

The very next evening I propositioned Guy, who listened with flattering attention. After telling him I had his play all set, I furnished him with a short but interesting description of the life, habits and desires of James Joseph Aloysius Burns. I then proposed that Guy place his twenty-five thousand to the bell-boy’s credit for one month, James to be allowed free

rein with the jack. If Burns has increased the amount at the end of thirty days, he is to return the original twenty-five thousand to Guy. If not, he must give back whatever amount he has left. All the principals are to be sworn to secrecy and that's all there is to my scheme—it's as simple as the recipe for hot chocolate!

"If Jimmy Burns is really miscast in life and has a brain and business ability far above hopping bells," I explain, "why, the use of twenty-five thousand for thirty days might make him one of the world's most famous men! It's a sporting chance, Guy—will you gamble?"

Guy looks somewhat perplexed. He stares into my excited face and clears his throat nervously.

"Well—I—of course, I am interested in *anything* you suggest, Gladys," he says. "I—eh—I suppose I am unusually stupid this evening, but I cannot see how my dowering this bellboy will assist me in writing my play."

"Listen," I says. "You claimed you'd put out twenty-five thousand for a plot, didn't you? Well, believe me, the movements of Jimmy Burns with twenty-five thousand dollars to do what he wants with will supply all the ideas you can handle—if you don't think so, you're crazy!"

"But——" begins Guy.

"Don't butt!" I cut him off, impatiently. "You're

not the goat yet and you won't be if you listen to teacher. All you have to do is give Jimmy the sugar, watch his stuff for the next thirty days, and you'll get a true to life masterpiece for your drama—probably a play that will show the making of a financial, scientific or artistic Napoleon! If you can't get a play out of the effect of sudden wealth on a lowly bellhop, then you got no business in the same room with a typewriter!"

Guy rubs his chin, smooths back his wavy hair and gazes out of the window at New York City.

"By Jove!" he busts out suddenly, slapping his hands together, "the thing is fantastic—grotesque—but I'll do it!"

So it came to pass that the next day Guy, Jimmy Burns, and myself met by appointment in the cashier's office of the Plumbers & Physicians National Bank. As I was on my lunch hour and minutes were at a premium, there was little time squandered on preliminaries, Guy making his proposition to the thunderstruck James in simple words of one syllable. At first, M. Burns refused to believe he wasn't being kidded, then he got hysterical with delight. When the startled cashier solemnly asked for his signature and handed him a bank book showing there was \$25,000 to his credit in the vaults, Jimmy broke down and cried like a baby!

“Now listen to *me*, young man,” I tell the panting Burns when he has hid the bank book in his shoe to the open amusement of Guy and the wondering cashier. “You want to get an immediate rush of brains to the head and make that twenty-five thousand *mean* something, because that’s the last you get if you cry your eyes out! That’s all there is, there isn’t any more, get me? You been going around squawking about what a world-beater you’d be if you had money. Well, now you got plenty of it and we look for big things from you. No clowning, remember, you *must* make good! Is all that clear?”

Still in a happy trance, Jimmy Burns removes his cap with a start.

“Ye-ye-yes, ma’am!” he gulps, the first time he was ever polite to anyone, before or since.

Well, really, the effect of that \$25,000 suddenly showered on Jamesy was every bit as startling as I expected—only in a slightly different way than I fondly hoped! Those pennies went right to his shapely head, and instead of stimulating his brain, why, they just *removed* it altogether. First of all, Jimmy got a wild and uncontrollable desire to leave the art of bellhopping flat on its back. Not satisfied to resign his portfolio in a dignified way, he kidded the guests, insulted the manager, rode Jerry Murphy till Jerry wanted his heart, and wound up by punching Pete Kift, the bell

captain, right on the nose. By an odd coincidence, these untoward actions got Jimmy the gate.

The plutocrat bellhop's next imitation was to apply for the most expensive suite in the hotel. They just laughed Hon. Burns off, telling him there was nothing but standing room left in the inn and try to get *that!* But Guy Tower came to the rescue and got Jimmy the suite as Guy wanted to keep his experiment under as close observation as possible while making notes for his play. Once settled in his gorgeous apartment, Jimmy swelled up like a mump and run his former colleagues ragged getting him ice water, stationery, telegram blanks and drug store gin. He staggered around in the most fashionable lobby in New York making cracks like "Hey, d'ye think Prohibition will ever come back?" to astounded millionaires and their ladies. Honestly, he was a wow! When one of the fellows he used to work with called him "Jimmy," the *née* bellboy angrily insists that the manager fire him for undue familiarity, remarking, "A guy has got to keep them servants in their proper places!"

He sent a wire to the Standard Oil Company asking if they couldn't use a younger man in Rockefeller's place, paid the dinge elevator pilots a dollar twenty times a day to stop the car and tie his shoe laces, panicked the highest priced tailor in Manhattan by ordering seven suits of "mufti," having read that the King

of England occasionally dresses in that, and generally misplayed his hand till everybody was squawking and in no time at all Jimmy Burns was about as popular as a mad dog in the St. Moe hotel. He failed to go through college like he promised he would, but he certainly went through everything else, and only for Guy, Jimmy would have been streeeted fifty times a day!

The next desire that attacks James is the ambition to see his name in the newspapers, so he advertises for a press agent. The first publicity purveyor who showed up made James think he was good by using nothing but adjectives in his conversation and asking for a honorarium of \$250 the week. Mr. Burns thought the salary was more than reasonable, but as he's the type that would ask Coolidge for a reference, he demanded one from the candidate for the job.

"You have asked the man who owns one—just a minute!" says the press agent cheerily, and not at all abashed he dashes out of the room. I heard all this when he stopped at my switchboard with Jimmy and asked me where the writing room was. In five minutes he's back, waving a paper in Jimmy's face.

"Look *that* over!" he says.

James read it out loud for my entertainment. According to this testimonial, the bearer had did about everything in the publicity line but act as press representative for a school where middle-aged eagles are

taught how to fly. James seems to get quite a kick out of it.

"I think I'll take this guy," he remarks, as he looks up from the reference.

"Fine!" says the delighted applicant. "That's a good thought. I'll snap right into it and——"

"Tomato sauce!" butts in James sneeringly. "I don't wish no part of *you*, the baby *I* want to hire is the bozo which wrote this recommendation of you. He's good, what I mean, a letter writin' idiot!"

"A bit odd that we should both be thinking the same thing," says Mr. Press Agent coolly. "As a matter of fact, I wrote that recommendation myself. So now that I'm engaged as your publicity expert, let me have a few of your photos and——"

The following morning nearly every front page in town displayed a picture of James Burns and this glaring headline:

BELL BOY LEFT MILLION BY GUEST HE  
ONCE LOANED DIME!

That was the press agent's first effort and, as far as *I* was ever able to see, his last. But it got ample results!

Within a week, Jimmy Burns had discovered what millions have discovered before *his* little day—that the mere possession of lucre does not mean happiness, and for some it means positive misery! Not only did



James become the prey of the charity solicitors, confidence workers, stock swindlers, "yes men," phoney promoters and other parasites that infest the hotel, but he was constantly in boiling water through his cuckoo escapades growing out of sudden wealth that sent his brains on location. After purchasing a diamond as big as Boston, only brighter, he bought the highest priced horseless carriage he could find in the market and the same identical day it slipped out of his hands and tried to climb the steps of the Fifth Avenue library. The gendarmes pinched him for reckless driving, though Jimmy protested that it wasn't really "wreckless" as he had plenty wreck, and his worship tossed the trembling James into the hoosegow for three days, remarking, "I'll teach you rich men a lesson!" Then the income tax beagles read that newspaper headline and came down on Burns like a cracked ceiling. So all in all, Jimmy was finding few chuckles connected with his pieces of eight.

When the rich but unhappy James got out of the Bastille, he decided to throw a party in his costly suite at the St. Moe for his former associates of the bellhops' bench. As Jimmy confided to me, apparently his only friend, he felt the immediate need of mixing with people who spoke his language. He wanted to forget his troubles and get back on a friendly footing with the boys, who had severed diplomatic relations with him on

account of his acting like he was Sultan of Goitre or something when he became a thousandaire over night. Jimmy felt that a first-class soirée would do the trick.

The party came off as advertised, but all it meant to the poor little rich man was more grief! It was really a respectable enough affair, no hats being broken or that sort of thing, and a pleasant time was had by all with the slight exception of the charming host. Our hero made two fatal mistakes. The first was not inviting Jerry Murphy and the second was laying in a stock of canny Scotch for medicinal purposes, in case any of his guests should get stricken with the dread disease of thirst. The result was that an epidemic of parched throats broke out early in the evening and pretty soon the other habitués of the St. Moe began complaining bitterly about the unusually boisterous race riot that was being staged with a top-heavy cast on the sixth floor. Mr. Williams, the manager, who liked Jimmy Burns and arsenic the same way, called upon Jerry Murphy to quell the disturbance and Jerry licked his lips with delight. The man-mountain house detective run all the way upstairs, figuring the elevators too slow to whisk him to a job as tasty to him as cream is to puss. Jerry pounded on the door of Jimmy's salon and demanded admittance. Recognizing his voice, James climbed unsteadily on a chair, opened the transom and peered with a rolling eye at Jerry.

“Go roll yer hoop—hic—you big shtiff, thish is gen’lmen’s—hic—gen’lmen’s blowout!” says Jimmy, carelessly pouring a pitcher of water, cracked ice and all, on Jerry’s noble head. “Hic—shee kin you laugh *that* off!”

Foaming at the mouth and uttering strange cries, the infuriated Jerry broke through the door and the panic was on! The beauty and chivalry present fled before the charging sleuth like they’d flee before a charging hippo, but the unfortunate Jimmy got left at the post. After cuffing him around the room till the sport palled on him, Jerry dragged James off to durance vile and once again Jamesy is put under glass, this time credited with illegally possessing spirits frumenti. They held him under lock and key all night and it took all of Guy Tower’s influence and quite a few of his quarters to get Jerry to withdraw the charge and free Jimmy the next morning.

Well, honestly, I felt sorry for Jimmy Burns, who was certainly taking cruel and unusual punishment and being made to like it. I thought perhaps if I injected a lady into the situation it might make things a bit more pleasant for him, so I introduced Hazel Killian to the “millionaire bellboy,” as the newspapers were still calling James. *O sole mia!* as they say in Iowa, what an off day my brain was having when it cooked up *that* idea! With visions clouding her usually painstaking

taste, of the Riviera, Paris, Monte Carlo, gems, yachts, Boles-Joyce limousines or what have you, Hazel took to Jimmy like a goldfish takes to a bowl and our evening expeditions now consisted of your correspondent and Guy, assisted by Hazel and Jimmy. We went everywhere together, with James insisting upon paying most of the bills. But while Jimmy was civil enough to Hazel, he simply showered his attentions on your little friend Gladys, grabbing every chance to make the most violent love to me. This greatly annoyed Guy and Hazel and equally greatly amused *me*—Jimmy was just a giggle to me, not a gasp!

In the meanwhile, Mr. Williams and Jerry Murphy had banded together to make James sick and tired of living in the Hotel St. Moe. He seldom found his room made up, there was always something wrong with the lights, the water and the steam, none of the help would answer his bells, and when he hollered for service he was told he would find it in the dictionary under S. But Pete Kift pulled the worst trick of all on him. With the radiant Hazel on his arm and Guy keeping military distance behind, Jimmy was proudly strutting through the lobby one fine evening. All were resplendent in evening clothes, and to show you I'm not catty I'll say that Hazel in an evening gown would attract attention away from the Yosemite. As the party neared the desk, Pete Kift suddenly looks at

Jimmy and bawls "*Front!*" at the top of his bull elephant's voice, and mechanically responding to the habit of a lifetime, poor Jimmy Burns grabs an amazed guest's suitcase and hastily starts for the elevator! The witnesses just screamed when they grasped the situation and recognized James as the ex-bellhop. Even Guy smiled, but it was different with Hazel, who could have shot down Mr. Burns on the spot in cold blood. As for Jimmy, well, honestly, he would have welcomed the bullet!

Nevertheless, in spite of this fox pass Hazel believed Jimmy had actually inherited an even million, and evidently James had not gone out of his way to make her think different. So one day Hazel tells me she's determined to make Jimmy her very own. When she adds that he has sworn to star her in a musical comedy or back her in a movie production, I nearly passed out! Can you imagine Jimmy, with only a few thousand left, making any such maniacal promises as that to a girl with a memory like Hazel's? *Oo la la*, what a fine disturbance James was readying himself for!

As I had vowed to say nothing about how Jimmy got his bankroll, I couldn't very well give the ambitious Hazel the lowdown on matters, but I *did* try most earnestly to lay her off him. I got nowhere! Refusing to be warned, Hazel point-blankly accused

me of having a yen for Jimmy myself, and then she set sail for this gilded youth in dead earnest.

Well, knowing nothing of Hazel's plans with regard to himself, the doomed Jimmy kept on entertaining like his first name was Astor, his middle name Vanderbilt and his last name Morgan. He took me, Hazel and Guy to the races at Belmont Park and stabled us all in a box. As James had loudly declared that he knew more about horses than Vincent Ibañez, we all played his feed box tips for five races and we learned about losers from him. When the sixth and last scramble arrived, Guy had donated \$1,500, I had sent in \$50, and Hazel had parted with \$80 to the oral books and was fit to be tied! What Jimmy lost, nobody knows. Anyhow, he gazed over the program for the sixth race, a mile handicap, and suddenly let out a yell.

"Hot dog!" he says, much excited. "Here's where we all get independent for life! They's a beagle in this dash by the name of Bellhop and if that ain't a hunch then Pike's Peak's a pimple. Get down on this baby with the family jools and walk outa here rancid with money!"

We split a contemptuous grin between us and presented it to Jimmy before getting down on the favorite in a last attempt to break even on the day. Jimmy milled his way back to our box, flushed and panting,

and gayly announced that he had shot the works on Bellhop's nose. He said we were all paranoiacs for not doing the same. Well, it was all over in a twinkling! The favorite found the handicap of our bets a bit too much and finished an even last. Bellhop tripped the mile in something like 0.96 and won from here to the Ruhr, clicking off \$15,000 for Mr. James Joseph Aloysius Burns. James then announced his intention of buying the horse and presenting it to Hazel for Arbor Day, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that me and Guy talked him out of it. Hazel gave us a murderous glare and for the rest of the day you couldn't have got a nail file between her and Jimmy, honestly!

Whirling back to New York in Jimmy's car, now steered by a uniformed chauffeur, I began to reprove James for this gambling and stepping out when he should be using his money and time to secure his future. What about all his promises to me? How about all the big things he was going to do? When was he going to enter business, or whatever he thought he could do best?

"Don't make me laugh!" says Jimmy, tapping an imported cigarette on a solid gold case. "I'm sittin' pretty. What a sucker *I'd* be to pester myself about work when I got all this sugar!"

"Of course," says Hazel, nestling closer to him. "Imagine a millionaire *working!*"

And the only thing that really burned me up was Jimmy's grin at Guy and the sly dig in the ribs he gave me, the little imp!

Well, from then on Jimmy had lots of luck and all of it bad. The fellow who invented money was a clever young man, but he really should have stayed around the laboratory for another couple of hours and invented an antidote for the trouble it brings. The well-to-do ex-bellhop used his jack as a wedge to get into one jam after another, till finally came the worst blow of all, and Miss Hazel Killian delivered it.

It seems that Hazel got fatigued waiting for Jimmy to unbelt the roll and star her in a musical comedy or a super-production, so she requested a showdown. Jimmy checked up and discovered he had blown all but about five thousand of his ill gotten gains, and as trustworthy reports had reached him that it would take about ten times that much to group a show around the beautiful Hazel, he calmly told her all bets were off. Hazel promptly fainted, but Jimmy's idea of first aid being an alarmed glance and a dash for the door, she quickly snapped out of it and demanded ten thousand dollars for the time she put in entertaining him.

"Aha—a gold digger, hey?" says Jimmy indignantly. "So you wish ten grand for entertainin' me? Where d'ye get that stuff? They ain't no ten thousand dol-



lars' worths of laughs in you for *me*, I'll tell the world! Take the air!"

Infuriated beyond speech, Hazel brought suit for \$100,000 against James the following day, charging that promising young man had promised to wed her. Further, deponent sayeth not!

That was the end of the high life for Jimmy Burns. Honestly, he was scared stiff and he got little comfort from *me*, for I was absolutely disgusted with the way he had carried on from the time Guy gave him that money. Opportunity had knocked on this little fool's door and he had pretended he wasn't at home. Not only that, but I felt he had got me in wrong with Guy Tower, whose \$25,000 investment for a plot now seemed a total loss. I told Guy tearfully how sorry I was that my scheme had failed to pan out, but he cut me off in the middle of my plea for forgiveness, his face a mass of smiles.

"My dear girl, you owe me no apology," says Guy, patting my shoulder. "It is I who owe you a debt of gratitude. I've written a farce-comedy around Jimmy's adventures with the twenty-five thousand, and Rosenblum predicts it will be the hit of the season! I've never seen him so enthusiastic. Your idea was more than successful, and Jimmy is welcome to whatever he has left of the money when the time limit expires!"

Wasn't that lovely?

In the meantime, the miserable Jimmy had tried to forget his worries again by mixing with his former fellow workmen about the hotel. Jerry Murphy and Pete Kift wouldn't give him a tumble, so he sat on the bellhop's bench all night, trying to square things with his ex-playmates. But now that he was a "millionaire" they put on the ice and treated him like a maltese would be treated at a mouse's reception.

A great longing comes over Jimmy to be a care-free bellboy again, without the burden of wealth. He felt the irresistible call of the ice water, the stationery and the tip! So, unable to lick the temptation, he sneaked the baggage of a few guests upstairs and was promptly run out of the hotel by the other boys for poaching on their preserves. To make things perfect, a couple of days later he was served with the papers in Hazel's suit.

Unable to cope with the situation and hysterical with fear, Jimmy rushed to the switchboard and made an appeal to me that would have melted a Chinese executioner. He placed the blame for the trouble he was in on my georgetted shoulders—manlike—and insisted that I had to get him out of the mess. The legal documents Hazel had him tagged with smacked to the terrified Jimmy of pitiless judges, stern juries, jail—perhaps even the gallows! Honestly, James was in fearful shape, no fooling. I shut off his moans finally, and told

him to get rid of whatever money he had left and I would take on myself the horrible job of explaining everything to Hazel. With a wild whinny, Jimmy dashed out of the hotel without even thanking me, gambled his remaining ducats in one wild stock market plunge—and two days later the ticker informed him that he was worth \$25,000 again!

But money was now smallpox to Jimmy Burns. It was just three weeks and four days since Guy Tower gave him the original \$25,000, and under the agreement Jimmy still had three days left to splurge. Nothing stirring! What he wanted to do now was to get *rid* of his wealth, as I had told him Hazel's barristers would never let her sue him should they find out the defendant had no more nickels. Jimmy wanted to go to law with Hazel the same way he wanted to part with his ears, so he busts in on Guy and tells him to take back his gold because he don't wish any part of it. Before the astonished Guy can open his mouth, Jimmy hurls twenty-five one thousand dollar bills on the table and flees the room!

Well, being an important customer of the St. Moe, Guy got Jimmy back his old job hopping bells, broke, but happy for the first time in a month. Then Guy insisted on me accepting a small royalty from his play for producing Jimmy Burns as the plot. That left everybody taken care of but the raging Hazel, who de-

clared herself off me for life and was packed and ready to leave me alone in New York. Guy solved that problem and made Hazel crazily happy by engaging her to play *herself* in his comedy, "Money to Burns."

## CHAPTER IV

### LOVE AND LEARN

ONE of the other nights me and Hazel went to see an endless reel super-production called "Murdered in Fun!"—one of these movies where "the audience stood up and cheered," according to the advertisements. Well, about the middle of this deliberate insult to the adult intelligence, Hazel and me stood up and *jeered*, departing for the great outdoors with most of the other indignant patrons of the mute drama. Calling this magic lantern atrocity terrible would be giving it a boost, no fooling!

The scenario of "Murdered in Fun!" was remembered by a first-class maniac named Galahad O'Mercy and it had everything in it but the Johnstown Flood. It was one of these mystery pictures where suspicion is sprayed on everybody in the cast and then at the welcome finish you find out it was really the camera man who shot the old banker right in the library. But honestly I wasn't fooled a bit when the web of circum-

stance was wove around the hero, heroine, comedian, ingénue and so forth to make each appear to be the criminal. Personally, *I* suspected the producers of the film!

But speaking of detectives reminds me of Oliver Thurston, and what Oliver Thurston reminds me of I am much too ladylike to mention. However, after I tell you about him, maybe you can guess it.

To begin with, Thurston was a jig-saw puzzle to me from the first, and generally I can read the sturdy menfolk with one swift glance. Oliver just didn't click with me, and somehow he seemed all wrong for a first-class, blown in the flask, Simon-pure sleuth! This gentleman didn't check up like the gum shoes of the books, plays and movies a-tall. He should have been middle-aged, slightly gray and stoop-shouldered, wearing horn-rimmed cheaters, packing a magnifying glass and a bulldog pipe, dressing in fearful taste and being slightly more bashful than a rabbit. Instead of that, Thurston was tall and broad-shouldered, a regular fashion plate, handsome in a cold-eyed, man of the world manner and about as timid as a hungry lion in a sheep pen. He was passionately in love with himself and took it for granted that everybody else was, too.

Around the St. Moe they certainly gave him ample reason to think he was good, the awed hired help treating him with a reverence that burned me up. Honestly,

he had 'em buffaloed, but it was different *here!* Before he'd been registered a week he fell right in line, filing his application to take me out, donating candy and flowers and stalling around the switchboard till the other girls were gnashing their teeth with envy. They said Thurston was just grand. I thought he was apple sauce, and from my actions he must have thought I was as cold as Nanook's nose. Without being able to put my finger on the reason, I just didn't like him. You've met people like that, haven't you?

One morning the newspapers are full of a big diamond robbery that baffles the local police. Jerry Murphy, moored at my board as usual, points to the headlines in a paper which, with the copper's instinct, he's carrying rolled up like a club.

"They'll never nail them babies," he says scornfully. "This is the softest slab in the world for a crook. When I think 'at I'm slavin' away keepin' law and order in this cave for a hundred and twenty bucks the month and a swell mob can go down in Maiden Lane and glom ninety grand for a few minutes' work, it's all I can do to keep honest!"

"What gives you the crazy idea that you're honest," I says, "when you're taking thirty dollars a week from this hotel for hanging around my switchboard all day? What a swell detective *you* are! All you've shown me since *I've* been here is that you got adenoids!"

"Is it *my* fault 'at they don't pull off a big job in this joint and give me a chance to display *my* wares?" says Jerry indignantly. "I only wish I could lure a flock of high-class crooks in here and I'd show you some stuff, Cutey! But you can't get the boys within radio distance of the St. Moe since *I* been on the job. The word's went out through them secret underground channels 'at Jerry Murphy, the new Sherlock Holmes, is on watch at the St. Moe, and they duck this place like the outside was nothin' but smallpox signs! Why, say, Cutey, when I was on the po-lice force I was the gossip of New York. Remember 'at fatal trunk murder on Tenth Avenoo about twenty years ago?"

"No, you big goof," I says angrily. "Twenty years ago I was busy being born!"

"Well, even so, you must of heard the nurse talkin' about it," says Jerry unruffled. "It was the most sensational murder since the Custer massacre and as full of mystery as boardin' house hash. I was only a young rookie copper, crammed with ambition and brighter than Jackie Coogan. For a month you couldn't pick up a newspaper without findin' my name in it!"

"For catchin' the murderer?" I asks breathlessly.

"For lettin' him go," says this clown coolly. "I nailed him as he run out of the house and the big stiff talked me out of it! Say, can I throw a party for you some night this week?"



"Nothing stirring, Jerry!" I says firmly. "I've told you that before. I can't afford to be pegged bounding around with you while we're both working here. It would cause embarrassing talk in the hotel and——"

"'At's all right, Cutey," butts in Jerry soothingly. "Don't you worry your pretty head about them embarrassin' *me*. If any of these monkeys sees us playin' around I'll say it wasn't you at all I was with, but some other crazy admirer of mine. By the way, I see this Mr. Thurston is givin' you quite a play."

I looked up in surprise because, honestly, that was the first time I had ever heard the hard-boiled Jeremiah call anybody "Mister" since I've been one of the show places of the St. Moe. Jerry would address President Coolidge as "Cal," no fooling!

"Thurston would give *any* woman a play, Jerry," I says contemptuously. "He's just like you—always looking for the best of it. The next time you see him parked at the board here you have my permission to chase him!"

"I think you're out of order there, Cutey," says Jerry seriously. "Mr. Thurston is a high-class fella, what I mean, and the rumor around here is 'at he's a perfect gent. And if 'at ain't sufficient, he's one of the greatest detectives which ever solved a bafflin' mystery from one look at the murdered man's sleeve garters! Nobody's hep to what he's here for, because like all

guys which knows their business he's under cover, but you can gamble it's big stuff. Prob'ly got somethin' to do with 'at diamond robb'ry. All *I* got to say is if he's after them mugs they might as well confess. He's the bat's larnyx, I'll tell the cross-eyed world!"

"Oh, be yourself!" I says impatiently. "I never heard of Thurston till he blew in here, and I don't believe anybody else ever heard of him either, outside of his parents. What mysteries did *he* ever solve? He looks like a big false alarm to me and if he doesn't keep away from me I'm going to send you out for a cop and have him put under glass for a while!"

"Well," says Jerry thoughtfully, "he may look all wrong to you, but he looks like a million to me in 'at swell scenery he wears. I only wish I had the art of dressin' like 'at baby does! He sure wears a wicked tuxedo. Nevers the less, should he speak out of turn with you, Cutey, I'll smack him down, and 'at goes for Jack Dempsey!"

At this critical minute who should come along but the very person we're talking about. Not Jack Dempsey, but Oliver Thurston. He curls his lip contemptuously when he sees Jerry, but our charming house sleuth greets the private detective like a dog greets its master. Really, I thought for a minute Jerry was going to tip his derby to this big fathead, and if he had I would have crowned him with my inkwell!

Jerry didn't linger long now that the great Thurston was on hand, but found himself needed in a place called Elsewhere. The second he waddled away Thurston bends over the board.

"If that big animal is annoying you, Gladys," he says, throwing his chest out a foot, "I'll be pleased to take him outside and give him a thrashing he'll never forget!"

Sweet spirits of niter! Both of these huskies ready to leap at each other's throats at a word from me! Don't you love that? I felt like the heroine in a movie—a very dull movie.

"You needn't commit suicide on *my* account," I says coldly. "Jerry Murphy may have plenty to learn about this and that, but he's nobody's fool in a rough and tumble. I've seen him go and I'd advise you not to choose him!"

Then I reached over and threw my fur about my shapely shoulders. I was very properly dressed, but georgette is rather sheer and with Thurston's eyes—beady even when he smiled—boring through it I honestly felt positively naked! I loathe men who look at you like that, don't you?

"I don't think I should have much trouble with Murphy, in spite of his prowess," sneers Thurston in an affected drawl. "Eh—I was a champion amateur boxer at one time, you know."

"Fawncy that!" I drawled back. Then I looked him up and down with a cold smile and added, "You hate yourself, don't you?"

Thurston frowns, and honestly his eyes become slits.

"Why are you so antagonistic to me?" he asks, like he can't understand how anyone can't resist him. "Don't you like me?"

"Do you expect me to leap up and kiss you?" I says evasively.

"Stranger things could happen," he remarks, with what I bet he thought was a killing smile.

"But not to *me!*" I snapped. "I don't like to slam the door in your face, but really I must ask you to shove off. It's against the rules for us girls to kid with the customers, and if you don't go away you'll get a ticket for violating the parking ordinance here."

"Will you dine with me tonight?" he asks eagerly.

"Mr. Thurston," I says, "I might as well tell you once and for all that I wouldn't go out with you if it was a felony not to. As who's this says, 'You may be all the world to your mother, but you're an awful bust to *me!*'"

"Is that so?" softly says Thurston, but he's fit to be tied—I can see it. "Is that so? Well, I'll make you a little wager that I'll take you out within a month!"

"Blaah!" I says politely. "You sound like a scenario. Step into number four booth, please!"

"Why?" he asks, a bit puzzled.

"I've got your number!" I says sweetly, and turned my back to him.

That was the beginning of one of the most exciting adventures I've had in an exceedingly exciting life!

Amongst the inmates of the St. Moe was Abigail Monkton, a charming tot of some fifty hard winters, enjoying the delights of her second childhood. Abigail was richer than a cup custard and as foolish as you'll find 'em outside of a sanitarium. Among the things Miss Monkton had failed to do in the mad rush and bustle of living was get married, and she was now making a frantic attempt to rectify that annoying error. Abigail was staging a stand against the ravages of time that proved she was as game as she was silly. Her weapons in a futile daily battle against the advancing years were rouge, powder, mascara, belladonna, lip sticks, expensive wigs, extreme clothes, much display of jewelry, ceaseless massages and manicures, baths of every known variety in the deadfalls called beauty parlors, and instruction in the latest dance steps from all the best known masters but St. Vitus.

Well, this gold-plated old maid was a scream to my little playmates of the telephone switchboard, but honestly Abigail was too tragic to me to be just a giggle. I pitied her, in spite of the fact that her continual "girlie" and "dearie" got on my nerves plenty.

Likewise I was a bit steamed up about her for making my popular sex ridiculous by going boy-crazy at fifty. She specialized in advice to the lovelorn, inviting the confidences of the other girls at the board and listening as breathlessly as a chambermaid at a keyhole to their alleged adventures and difficulties with their Johns. Realizing that Abby got quite a kick out of this stuff, these impish young ladies took the brakes off their lively imaginations, enjoying her eager attention just as much as she enjoyed their cuckoo stories—which was ample! Old enough to be their grandmother, Abby always addressed the bunch as “we girls,” and when I bawled ’em out for kidding Old Mother Goose with their fairy tales they told me to tend to my own activities, because it was all fun and Abigail was a find that they didn’t intend to lose now that they had her all built up. They could always put the bee on her for pin money between pay days, and an especially good love story in which one of ’em played the wronged victim would bring a hat or a gown from the champion listener of the world. Terrible, weren’t they?

Being twice as flirtatious as Potiphar’s wife, Abigail knew where the sterner sex gathered and honestly she lingered around the switchboard like the odor of boiled cabbage in a Sixth Avenue kitchenette. She vamped one and all, featuring coy glances and kittenish snickers, to the great entertainment of the males. But as I

feared, it was Oliver Thurston that goaled her. One glance at the handsome Nick Carter and Abby was overboard!

With a cynical grin I watched her set sail for him, and while her work was fearfully crude and amateurish, I must say she got results. Edging up beside Mr. Detective one day when he was making a stall of looking up a name in the phone book so he could pester poor little me, Abigail's first imitation was to cough and drop her handkerchief. That's all been done away with in the new rule books. Following a life-long and expensive habit, Thurston turned his comely head at the feminine cough, immediately seeing the bit of silk on the floor and the "you-chase-me-and-I'll-chase-you" expression on Abigail's face. His own features were a three-second movie, really! A harsh laugh stopped at his tonsils and his cold, rather cruel eyes narrowed. Then off comes his chapeau, as with a drawing room bow and a dazzling smile he recovers the handkerchief and returns it to the delighted Abigail Monkton.

Thus began Abigail's mock romance, caused by Cupid changing from an angel-eyed chubby little darling to a hard-faced, devilish little brat!

After that day Thurston seemed as unable to keep away from Abby as a sardine is unable to keep away from a can. They were always meeting in the lobby and the wires between their rooms were busier than

Busy himself. The other girls were convulsed by the stuff they eavesdropped, but honestly I wouldn't be bothered listening in to any sweet nothings passed between a Romeo of thirty and a Juliet of fifty, if you know what I mean. However, I did kid Thurston once about his affair of the heart, as they say in Guatemala, and his reaction surprised me. Instead of laughing it off, he told me very seriously that Abigail was delightful and dwelt on her charms to such an extent that I soon stopped smiling and became very, very thoughtful. When I saw them having tea together on the roof garden later, with Abigail gazing into Thurston's eyes as if they were a couple of suppressed novels, I began to speculate in earnest on just what the big boy's racket was.

The mysterious private detective's attentions to the simpering foolish virgin didn't seem to slow up his ambitions in my direction a particle, though whenever dear old Abby was in the immediate vicinity Thurston throttled down and became merely polite to me. This amused me so highly that simply because I didn't like his work I made matters harder for Oliver Thurston by flirting outrageously with him the minute Abby came near the switchboard and refusing even to talk to him when she was nowhere to be seen.

Then one bright morning Abigail hurls the fashionable St. Moe into a turmoil by excitedly dashing into



the manager's office and loudly squawking that her \$100,000 pearl necklace has been abducted from her boudoir. Honestly, she made more noise than a dress rehearsal of a lynching about losing this gewgaw, and in spite of the frantic efforts of the hotel management to keep the thing quiet, why, the thrilling news seeped out and the panic was on. Anyone who can keep a matter like that a dark secret in a large New York hotel can also make a stone bleed to death!

Well, for the next few days you couldn't turn around in our well known inn without bumping into a plain-clothes man, a reporter or a photographer. This got Mr. Williams, the manager, red-headed, but it tickled Abigail silly. Honestly, she was having the time of her life, giving out interviews and posing for newspaper pictures all day long. When public interest in the robbery seemed to be dying down, Abby hauled off and offered a reward of \$10,000 for the return of her necklace and that started something!

For one thing, it threw a pair of people right into the spotlight and put it up to them to make good or turn in their shields as detectives and forever hold their peace. The two were Jerry Murphy, our noble house gum shoe, and Oliver Thurston, the private pussy-footer. Jeremiah promptly swelled all up like a sprained ankle and told the world fair that the ten thousand was the same as in the bank to his account, as he had every

## LOVE AND LEARN

intention of restoring the pearls and jailing the thief over the week-end. Nobody gave poor Jerry a chance beyond telling him he was a comic opera detective, and to keep his nose out of the case as he'd only make a bad matter worse. It was Mr. Oliver Thurston who got the undivided attention of one and all. Here was the big chance for him to prove that he meant something, and the habitués of the St. Moe, positive he was bonded goods, sat back expectantly to watch him do his stuff.

But to everybody's astonishment, Thurston seemed only mildly concerned about Abigail's robbery and made little or no comment on it, intimating that million dollar thefts and unusual murder mysteries were more in his line. So lordly was his manner that this explanation evidently satisfied and impressed the rest of 'em, but it was the turkey's fountain pen to me! The first chance I got I asked this so called clue collector how come *he* wasn't functioning in the great \$100,000 pearl necklace mystery. Thurston smiled carelessly and flicked the ash off his cigarette with a carefully manicured nail.

"In the first place, my dear girl," he says, pushing back a yawn, "nyther Miss Monkton nor the hotel management has retained me in the matter, and in the second place"—another flick of his cigarette ash—"eh—in the second place, I am not particularly interested in petty larceny!"

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"Tomato sauce!" I says sarcastically. "I suppose you could ponder all night and yet not find use for that ten thousand dollars' reward, *eyether?*"

"The reward doesn't attract me," says Thurston coolly. "You *do*—which is why I am here instead of idiotically dashing around hunting the thief like that fool Murphy. Another thing, my dear girl, I never take a case because of a reward. That is for amateurs. If the hotel or Miss Monkton wishes my services in recovering her necklace, they may be obtained at any time on my usual terms."

"Fair enough," I says. "But personally, I wouldn't have your services in anything on any terms. I think you're the bunk, I do for a fact!"

Thurston smiled, but with his lips only. His eyes looked stilettos at me, really!

Well, Jerry Murphy's attempts to make a name for himself as a thief-catcher will be remembered at the St. Moe for many a year. For a week Jerry was busier than an epileptic bill-poster on a windy day, and at the end of that time he hadn't found Abigail's necklace, but he *had* lost his job! He sent Abby right up in flames with personal questions as to how she lost the necklace, suspected everybody in the hotel as the robber, gave the indignant guests the third degree, till in forty-eight hours sixty cash customers had checked out of our hostelry foaming at the mouth, busted into the rooms

at all hours of the day and night hunting clues, fingerprinted the entire staff and all the guests who would stand for it, and at one time or another tried to pinch the entire ship's company at the St. Moe.

Thurston seemed to get more unholy fun out of Jerry's clowning than anyone in the hotel, and the way this big goof baited Jeremiah was positively brutal. He'd wink at me and call our light-brained house detective aside, filling him full of crazy suggestions for catching Abigail's burglar, and where anybody else would have run Thurston bow-legged, the awed Jerry eagerly followed these tips with the result that he was in hot water as often as steam is.

About this time Miss Abigail Monkton, the elderly charmer of a thousand surprises, sprung a fresh sensation. Three or four weeks after her necklace disappeared, she stopped at the switchboard one day all excited.

"Have they found your necklace yet?" I asked her for the 'steenth time.

"No!" says Abigail, with a grimace that threatened her facial enamel. "My dear, I'm positively disgusted with the police and that impossible Murphy creature. Positively dis-gus-ted! Beyond subjecting me to imbecilic and insulting cross-examinations, they have done nothing. Ab-so-lute-ly nothing! But *s-s-sh!* May I trust you not to repeat something?"

"I keep a mean secret!" I says.

"Well," says Abigail smilingly, "I have engaged Mr. Thurston to catch the thief and solve the mystery of my missing necklace. What do you think of that?"

"I don't think you could have engaged anyone who knows more about it!" I says, with deliberate significance.

Abby checks a smile, frowns and looks at me queerly. "Just what do you mean by that remark?"

"Why—er—I mean—er—I think Mr. Thurston is just the man to cope with a mystery of this kind," I told her, covering up. "But he's quite expensive, isn't he?"

This time Abigail's face was just the background for a large, happy grin.

"Mr. Thurston's services are not costing me a penny!" she simpers. "Not one penny. You see—I—we—oh, congratulate me, girlie, *we're engaged!*"

Good night!

"Do you actually mean to tell me that big—er—that Mr. Thurston has proposed *marriage* to you?" I asked, in a faint voice.

Abigail saw that I was a bit upset over the news, but she misguessed the reason.

"There, there—don't be downcast, dearie," she says soothingly. "I know all you girls must have had fond hopes in Oliver's direction, he's so thrillingly hand-

some and clever, isn't he? But cheer up, maybe some other Oliver will come along and—who knows?"

I felt like telling her you could get Oliver Thurstons for a dime a dozen and that I'd think that price exorbitant. I wanted to warn her that this patent-leather haired, sleek young vulture was a type as familiar to me as the subway and that I gave his superiors the air every day. But what would be the use? Already filled with the maniacal idea that every girl in the hotel was jealous of her charms, putting in the rap for Thurston would only make her more in love with him than ever and less in love with *me*. So as I frequently use my head for more than a hat rest, I kept my little mouth shut and let nature take its course!

But as for this Thurston Don Juan—well, honestly, I was simply furious at him! The very idea of his trying to take *me* out, when all the time he was scheming to marry this silly old maid for her doubloons! The more I thought matters over the more I was determined to punish this fellow, and that brought me around to thinking of Abigail's robbery. All of a sudden I made up my mind to solve the mystery of the missing necklace myself! That ten thousand dollars' reward would make at least one of my daytime dreams come true, and at the same time I could help Jerry Murphy come back.

Having been rubbed off the payroll by the disgusted

hotel management, poor Jerry was forlornly hanging around outside the St. Moe like a lost sheep. Well, I decided that I'd help him regain his job and former glory by giving him a chance to steal the private detective's thunder. Having that all settled in my mind, I smoothed back my hair and went to work!

The first thing was to find out what, if anything Thurston had discovered in the way of clues pointing to who stole the necklace, so I began alternately flirting with him and riding him hard on his failure to show some results. But Abigail's boy friend was so madly infatuated with himself that he accepted my attention as no more than his due, and when I switched to sarcasm it rolled off his egotism like water off an oilskin. Finally, however, he began to respond to treatment, and one day he point blankly declared he had solved the mystery. He made that interesting statement with so little of his usual bluster that somehow I instantly believed him.

"Who's the thief?" I asked excitedly.

Thurston smiled mysteriously.

"Ah!" he says, "that will indeed surprise you, my dear girl. So will the solution of this unusual case. I expect to make an arrest within twenty-four hours, and when I do—well, to say you will be astonished would be making a most conservative statement!"

"Yes, yes—go on!" I begged. "If you don't tell me

who stole that costly bauble from Abigail's alabaster neck, I'll perish of excitement!"

And really I was no more than half kidding, at that!

"I wouldn't have you perish for worlds," says Thurston, leaning over the board. "But it's much too long and too interesting a tale to relate here and now. Dine with me tonight and I promise you a story as fascinating as yourself!"

I know that curiosity killed the cat, but I am no cat and here was the chance I had played for. I promptly said I'd go and the sudden glitter in Thurston's eyes actually made me shiver!

When I went off duty at five that afternoon, the disconsolate Jerry was parked outside with the doorman as usual. I called a taxi and told Jerry to get in it with me, and although our ex-house detective looked plenty puzzled, he leaped inside with astonishing speed. Jeremiah started right in making love to me but I quickly stopped that part of it and told him where I was going, why I was going and what I wanted *him* to do. With the dumb, unquestioning obedience of those born to obey orders, Jerry placed himself at my commands. He had the pawn ticket for the tuxedo he'd been compelled to wear when on night duty at the St. Moe, and when we reached my flat I staked him to twenty-five dollars and sent him home to climb into the tux after letting a barber have his way with his face



and hair. Then I bribed Hazel Killian to dress and accompany Jerry to the Palais, where Thurston was taking me to eat, drink and be merry. Thurston had never met Hazel and I figured if there was a girl with Jerry when Thurston saw him at another table, he wouldn't be unduly suspicious.

I put on my war paint, had my blonde tresses dressed, arrayed myself in my most daring—and *only*—evening gown and sat down to wait for Mr. Oliver Thurston with about the same delightful anticipation that a spider watches the approach of a nice fat fly! Promptly at seven o'clock he appeared, and the soft whistle that accompanied the gleam in his eyes showed me that the time I had devoted to readying myself had not been wasted.

Although I liked him and measles the same way, I had to admit that Thurston in evening dress was no eye-irritant. It seemed to me that his cheeks were somewhat flushed and he was more talkative than usual, burning me up by acting as if I belonged to him from the time he arrived to the time we sat down in the Palais.

On the way to our table we passed Jerry and Hazel, but, as instructed, they didn't give us a tumble. Thurston saw them, however, and sneered.

"Where does that gil rate a snapper like that?" he says, nodding to the beautiful Hazel at Jerry's table.

"He's as out of place here as a celluloid suit would be in Hades!"

Honestly, I was so surprised by his *language* that for a moment I didn't do anything but stare at him! Around the hotel his English had been painfully correct; now, with a half silly grin on his flushed face and an unusual brightness in his eyes, he was as coarse and slangy as a bellhop.

After we ordered and Thurston drives me wild with embarrassment by loudly browbeating the waiter, I asked him who stole Abigail's necklace.

"All in good time, sweetie!" he says, leering at me. "All in good time. First we'll have a little snifter!"

With that he yanks a silver flask out of his hip pocket and pours me a generous drink, in spite of my protests. I didn't argue with him about it, as I didn't want to attract too much attention, but I *did* want Thurston to talk so I didn't object to him tossing off the swallow he had poured for me and another one, too. These two stiff jolts on top of what he'd already inhaled loosened him up considerably. His suave, polished, affected manner just melted away like fried ice and his real self came to the surface.

He scarcely touched his food, but lolled back in his chair looking me up and down and telling me over and over again what a knockout I was. I wanted to murder him, but I let him rave on in the hope of hearing about

Abigail's necklace, though his language and manner got rougher and rougher. He spoke of Jerry as a "dick," mentioned "harness bulls," referred to lawyers as "mouthpieces" and Sing Sing as "the big house." A strange premonition was slowly creeping over me and I listened to him with palpitating heart and bated breath. Then out of a clear sky came the fireworks!

Pawing across the table, Thurston managed to get hold of my hand.

"Listen here, beautiful," he says thickly. "Forget about that job of yours at the St. Moe. You got too much stuff to be answering phone calls at that trap, get me? S'pose you answer *my* calls for a while. I got important money and I'm going to get plenty more. I'll take you to Europe, and, girlie, we'll go places! I'll cover every inch of you with a jewel, show you some towns that would make New York look like Oshkosh, give you twice whatever you ask for! Will you play?"

I don't know what stopped me from slapping his face—I've done it for much less than that!

"What about Abigail Monkton?" I asked him, turning my face away so he couldn't see my disgust.

Thurston looked puzzled for an instant and then he threw back his head and laughed so uproariously that heads turned in our direction from near-by tables.

I caught Jerry Murphy's inquiring eye and signaled him to be ready!

"Abigail Monkton, eh?" says Thurston, wiping his eyes and then pouring himself another drink, "Well, sweetie, that dame is about the softest thing I've ever met up with in a mighty soft world! She's double cuckoo over your little boy friend and I'm all set to glom her rocks and do a vanishing act. I got that dizzy old maid jumping through hoops, no kidding! Why, she thinks I'm going to *marry* her, can you feature that?" He lowers his voice and leans over the table. "Listen, kid," he whispers. "She's got five hundred grand worth of jewelry that I can put my hands on tonight, and before she'd ever peg me we could be in Monte Carlo! When that dough runs out, we'll breeze over to London and I'll grab another Abigail. The world's full of that kind of dames, kid, just *full* of 'em, and there's never a chance of a pinch because they can't stand the exposure themselves, get me? I'll give you a square deal, sweetie, I'll—why, say, I'd even *marry* you if you insisted on it, that's how you got *me* jazzed up! Don't worry about Abigail making a squawk, either, she won't dare. Why, I took one of these female saps down the line in Nice about two years ago and——"

Too full of Scotch to read the expression on my face, Thurston rattled on, boasting of his disgusting adventures with these silly old women while I listened speech-

less and wide-eyed, absolutely hypnotized with amazement and contempt!

Finally I got up enough nerve to ask him if he was the one who stole Abigail's necklace. This brought more laughs from my charming vis-à-vis.

"No, sweetness," he says, "I haven't nailed that—yet! *She never lost it*, what d'ye think of that? I told you I'd surprise you, didn't I? Well, get this—the old fool is crazy to see her name in the papers, so she frames up that robbery story. Then I was to solve the 'mystery' and she thought we'd get married, see? That would make a first-class romance from a newspaper angle—'Weds Sleuth Who Recovers Stolen Heirloom!' Can't you see the headlines?"

I had seen and heard enough—plenty! I stood up and called to the waiting Jerry, who came on the run.

"Arrest him, Jerry," I panted. "He's not a detective, he's a thief!"

When Jerry gruffly told this Sir Galahad he was pinched, really, I thought for a moment Thurston was going to knock me down, and I felt very faint and scared, but I held my ground. He seemed suddenly fairly sobered up by the shock as he glared at me ferociously and muttered something about "a woman and booze" having licked him. Jerry hustled him outside so quickly that only those right around us had even a hazy idea of what it was all about.

Once out in the clean open air, the somewhat puzzled Jerry asked me what was next on the program. Thurston had bragged about being an amateur champion boxer once, but a look at the grim-faced, scowling Jerry seemed to quell any ambitions he might have had to do any boxing right then! Calling a taxi, I told the chauffeur to drive to the nearest police station and Thurston laughed wickedly.

"Go ahead," he sneers. "You have nothing on me—not a single solitary thing! All you'll do is make your friend Abigail the laughing stock of New York, because if they hold me I'll spill everything, get me? That story about her pretending she was robbed will look nice in print and make the Hotel St. Moe crazy about her, *won't* it?"

Well, honestly, this gave me something to think about. After all, poor Abigail was one of my own sex. A silly old woman? Sure! But to me there was tragedy in the thing, too. I didn't fancy the job of letting the whole world know what a fool she had been—maybe there was another way out of the mess. Anyhow, I decided to leave Thurston's fate to *her*, so I rapped on the window and told the chauffeur to turn around and drive to the Hotel St. Moe.

The gorgeously attired Abigail's face was the playground of many emotions as we all stalked solemnly into her suite, telling her maid to stay outside. I

wasted no time in preliminaries, but told my story at once. I left out nothing, hating myself as I saw ten more years add themselves to her drawn features as she listened in stony silence. Jerry stopped Thurston's first interruption by hurling him into a chair, and there our villain sat in sneering quiet till I finished. The moment I stopped talking, however, he sprang to his feet and denied everything, telling Abigail I had made up my entire story out of jealousy because he had thrown me over for her!

Honestly, this astonishing statement and the cool way Thurston made it dumfounded me for a moment, and Abigail seemed to read my silence and the dazed expression on my face as an admission of guilt. She looked daggers at me and Thurston smiled triumphantly, stepping quickly to her side. But it was the usually slow thinking Jerry Murphy who came to my rescue and ruined Mr. Thurston. Jerry stepped forward, yanked out a brutal looking automatic and grabbed Thurston's arm.

"You and me is goin' down to Headquarters, fellah!" growls Jerry. "It's against the rules in this man's town to impoisonate a dick. Maybe after they fingerprint you and look up your Bertillon down there they'll want you to stick around for a while! Are you comin' quiet, or do you want me to bend this gun over your head? Makes no difference to *me!*"

Thurston got real pale and stared from Abigail to Jerry's set face. From there his frightened gaze fell upon me and I curled my lip at him, turning away in scorn. Then the phoney detective looked longingly at the windows—but we were twelve stories up! Suddenly he shook Jerry off and faced Abigail.

"All right, I'm licked!" he blurts out. "This woman has told you the truth!" He looks at me and his lips draw away from his flashing teeth. "If I had laid off the booze you'd never got hep to me in a million years, with all your smartness. As for this fellow here"—he nods contemptuously at Jerry—"he's a joke, that's all, a laugh! Well, now you got me, what are you going to do with me? It's a cinch Miss Monkton don't want me pinched. She don't want me to tell my story to the reporters, you can gamble on that part of it! Suppose we call it a stand-off and I'll duck the hotel. Fair enough?"

Really, it seemed a terrible crime to let this fellow walk out scot-free after all he'd done and tried to do to Abigail, yet that appeared to be the only thing to be done if she was to be spared the ridicule of the newspapers. However, the stunned Abigail, who had loved and learned, showed unexpected spirit at this critical point. She took a long, searching look at me—a look that began at the top of my blonde hair, traveled slowly



over me to the tips of my slippers and then went back again to my face. There was a kind of wistful admiration in her tired eyes. Then she walked over to the mirror and stared at her own aged and haggard reflection for a lengthy moment. There wasn't a sound in the room!

Abigail let forth a sigh that must have come from her very heels and slowly opened one of the windows. She looked so tragic and resigned I felt sure she was going to jump and I started over to her with Jerry, who had the same idea. But Abby waved us back with a queer smile, as if reading our minds. Bang! Out of the open window goes wig, beauty clay, rouge, powder, chin straps—everything! Off comes rings and bracelets and into a drawer with them. Next she snatches up a towel and vigorously rubs all the paint off her face, finally standing before us a plain, wrinkled gray-haired, disillusioned old woman, but there's a fiery sparkle in her rather nice eyes.

"That's that!" she says, in a firm voice that broke the unnatural silence. "I am finished masquerading—quite finished!" She looked at Thurston, who grinned callously at her, and a bit of natural color flushed her wan cheeks. "As for this contemptible creature who threatens me with ridicule if he is arrested—well, *arrest him!* I hope he gets a life sentence! Let him tell what he pleases, and I would like to see a metropoli-

tan newspaper print any reflection on me without proof!"

I ran over and threw my arms around her, and, darn it, *I* was the one to burst into tears!

"This way to the hoosegow!" says Jerry to Thurston. "Make it snappy!"

"You little, double-crossing——" hisses Thurston at me.

"Ah!" roars Jerry, smacking his lips. 'I been waitin' patiently for you to crack somethin', you yegg!'

Sock! Scunch! Biff! . . . And Mr. Oliver Thurston instantly became unhandsome, undignified and unconscious!

At police headquarters they welcomed him later with open cells, quickly identifying him as being wanted in Des Moines, Chicago, Philadelphia and Walla Walla for similar swindles on similar foolish women. Abigail made Jerry and me split the ten thousand reward she had offered for the return of the necklace she never lost, saying we had earned it for exposing Thurston and saving the rest of her jewels. Jerry got back his job at the St. Moe, Abby went to Europe and a pleasant time was had by all.

Except Thurston!

## CHAPTER V

### KING LEARY

*"Sweet is revenge—especially to women!"*

The above remark, which, as I read it over, seems to have all the earmarks of a nasty dig at one of our most popular sexes, was pulled by no less than Lord Byron nearly a hundred years ago. I don't know which of his prolific affairs de heart the boy was trying to get out of when he sneered that one, but I *do* know that the talented peer said a mouthful!

I'm in a position to O. K. Byron's statement for two excellent reasons: First, I'm a woman; and second, I once had a generous portion of revenge, the saccharin taste of which is in my mouth yet! Please don't get the idea that I'm mean, I'm not, really. As a rule it's all fun to me and I want to see everybody get by. But when some impossible clown like this Grenadier Tompkins gets rosy with me, it's all different! Then I'm positively poison, as I'm sure the Grenadier will be glad to tell you—if he's regained consciousness yet. The last time I saw the perfectly priceless old thing he

was reclining at full length on the canvas at the National Sporting Club of jolly old London, as stiff as a head waiter's shirt. I put him there, with some kind assistance from Fighting Paddy Leary.

When he crossed my path, Monsieur Leary was just a nice young fellow who earned an honest living breaking noses. He was just one of a thousand others, with nothing about him that particularly stood out except maybe his ears, which bore a really clever resemblance to overripe cauliflowers. Well, I snatched him out of the mob and made him a king—king of the middle-weight boxers!

I hope you won't think I'm in the habit of cuddling up to prize fighters, because nothing could be further from the truth, unless possibly one of Sinbad's travelogues. I'm no fight fan; honestly, I wouldn't trip across the street to see Dempsey versus two gorillas even if they gave the gorillas axes to even things up. In fact I still shudder when I think of Fighting Paddy Leary and Grenadier Tompkins, two young men who might have been useful bookkeepers or something, beating each other into a highly unpalatable jelly in that London arena while a blood-thirsty crowd cheered them on. Heavens, what animals men are! Still, they're pretty good company.

There's an old saying that familiarity breeds contempt, and I guess the reason the male sex is just a

road show to me is because I see so many of the boys daily. Their constant attempts to get familiar with me is what has made me contemptuous—and plenty wary! I learned to say “No!” when I was fifteen. In that way I suppose I’ve missed plenty of laughs, but then think of the tears I’ve avoided!

As the result of rescuing Abigail Monkton from the clutches of Oliver Thurston, I won myself five thousand dollars. That kind of money might make Mr. H. Ford giggle, but what it made *me* do was gasp! It raised my bank account to \$5,056.23 and gave me a chance to do something I’d been wanting to do for ages, i.e., take a voyage to Europe. Hazel Killian wanted to shove off, too. Her name was now up in the lights of a Broadway show, but still Hazel doesn’t broad-A *me*, knowing that I can put on a bathing suit and ruin her!

Well, I casually mentioned our contemplated journey abroad to my boy friends, and honestly I was simply buried under a landslide of offers of escort and tickets. Old Mr. Rankin, the retired something or other, who has fifty-six dollars for every German in Berlin and evidently an unfulfilled yearning for each dollar, even tried to ply me with the use of his private yacht. I coldly turned everybody down because I never do that kind of stepping. But Hazel called me a sap for the ages and moaned bitterly when I rejected the pri-

vate yacht. I carefully described the look in the ancient mariner's fishy eyes when he made his generous proposition and Hazel laughed me off.

"You're dizzy!" she says. "That old Rankin is the real McCoy. I'll bet he's a gentleman and a scholar and that yacht has some well-stocked wine vaults aboard. We'd have the time of our lives without any hats broken or any harm in it at all!"

"He wants to go *with* us," I gently reminded her.

"I can take care of myself anywhere!" brags Hazel. "And for all *you* know, he may be just a nice old man who loves company."

"Be yourself!" I sneered. "Listen—I have had to get out and walk from nine million automobiles, Hazel, and I don't propose to get out and walk from a yacht!"

So *that* was all settled.

About ten days before we went down to the sea in ships I met Fighting Paddy Leary. I was breaking in the girl who was going to try and take my place while I was giving Europe a treat when a broad-shouldered, well-dressed young fellow came over to the switch-board. Really he wasn't bad looking, if you forgot about his battered ears and rather long nose.

"Good morning," he says. "Say, will you git me Columbus eight-six-seven-five-four-three and ask for Mister Vasiloff? *V-a-s-i-l-o*——"

"*V* like in *veal*?" I interrupt his spelling.

"No," he says. "Not *V* like in *veal*—*V* like in *Vasiloff*!"

"What's the difference?" I says.

"Plenty difference," returns the handsome city chap without cracking a smile. "I don't wish no *veal*!"

"Pick up the marbles, you win!" I laugh. "*V* like in *Vasiloff* coming up. Who will I say wants to speak to this Irishman?"

"Fighting Paddy Leary," he says, a bit proudly.

At that I threw the laugh into high. "So your name's *Leary*, eh?" I says. "Well, I wish I had your nose full of nickels!"

Fighting Paddy returns my grin with interest. "My real name's Herschel Goldstein," he breaks down and confesses. "Now will you throw the voice with the smile into the phone and git me that number, or do I have to bring a note from my parents?"

I shoved in the plug. "Say—what's your racket?" I ask him, just for fun.

"I'm in the glove business, Good-lookin' " he says and hands me a card. So's you'll miss nothing, I want you to see it:

**FIGHTING PADDY LEARY**

**MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPION OF PIKE'S PEAK**

*"Dieu et mon droit!"*

Don't you love that?

"What does that apple sauce mean at the bottom of the card?" I ask him. "I can't read Persian."

"Oh—'*Dieu et mon droit*'?" says Fighting Paddy airily. "That's Frog for 'God and my right!' the motto of King Richard the First. I found that part of it out in the Fifth Avenoo lib'ry, where I hang out when I ain't boxin'. I get lots of laughs out of that hokum like 'Hamlet,' 'Three Weeks,' 'The International Cyclopedia' and the like. At the same time I'm educatin' myself, what I mean!"

"Fair enough," I says. "But what has all that got to do with your putting a king's motto on your business card?"

"Well," explains Fighting Paddy seriously. "King Dick's slogan seems to of been made to order for me! I also bank everything on God and my right—my right hook to the button! I don't know what kind of a puncher his highness was with his right, but when I sock 'em they stay socked, don't think they don't. That's a swell dress you got on, Blondie."

"Knowing how to wear your clothes runs in our family," I says. "My uncle on my mother's side was for years the best dressed fellow in the Larimer County almshouse."



"I think you're givin' me a pushin' around," says Fighting Paddy. "How 'bout a little service on that number?"

"They don't answer, King Leary," I tell him.

"Keep ringing' 'em," he says. "Maybe the bell will get on their nerves. And don't think you're kiddin' me with that king business, because before long I'll *be* a king in my line! If you ever get five minutes to yourself to scan the papers, you might of saw where I stopped Forty-two-Round Hogan over in Jersey just a week ago. Hogan was known far and wide as a glutton for punishment, but he couldn't cope with me. That's one glutton I give indigestion!"

"There's no use of you trying to sell yourself to *me*, king," I says. "Honestly, I know nothing about prize fighting."

"It ain't hard to learn," says Fighting Paddy. "There's only one rule which amounts to anything—keep your shoulder blades off the floor. That's all there is to it, but try and do it! What I commenced to say was that by knockin' Forty-two-Round Hogan for a mock orange I get a fight with Grenadier Tompkins, world's middleweight champion. Two years ago I was that egg's sparrin' partner. One day I got sick of lookin' at him and smacked him dead in a trainin' bout. They throwed me out on my ear. A year later I boxed him a fifteen-round draw. I took him too

serious, trained too hard and left my fight in the gym. In London it'll be different and——”

“In *London?*” I butt in.

“In London,” says Fighting Paddy. “I’m supposed to step twenty frames with the champ at the National Sportin’ Club there in less than a month. I’ll knock him for a loop in a couple of rounds and then I’ll be king of the middleweights. I only wish you could be there to see me go!”

“I’ll give you a laugh,” I says. “Maybe I *will* see you go! I’ll be one of London’s show places myself in a couple of weeks. I’m going over with Hazel Killian. Maybe you’ve heard of her? She’s——”

“Heard of her?” interrupts Fighting Paddy with a wide grin. “*Heard* of her? Say—I was *dragged up* with her over on Tenth Avenoo! Ask her does she remember Nosey Goldstein, whose old man run the delicatessen. Ask her about Chuck Noland and Whitey Schmidt and Guinea Calamari and Mary McCann. We all played around together when we was kids. And say—it’s a funny thing, but today every one of us has made their mark. I’m going to be middleweight king, Hazel’s a Broadway star, Chuck Nolan’s leadin’ the National League in pitchin’ and Whitey Schmidt’s doin’ a twenty-year rap in Sing Sing. We all got some-where’s!”

Wasn’t he a scream?

"It's funny Hazel never mentioned you to me," I says, when I stopped laughing.

"It'd be much more comical if she did!" says Fighting Paddy. "I guess she wouldn't give me a tumble these days. She's out in front and I'm nowheres—yet. But believe me, I'm proud of that girl, no foolin'. I've watched her leap from the magazine covers to the footlights as tickled as if she was my own sister! I'd sure like to see her before you take that boat ride. Maybe we could frame for the three of us to go places together in London, all bein' Americans alone in that slab. I'll git you a ringside box for my quarrel with Grenadier Tompkins and after I flatten him I'll throw a party which will put a permanent wave in your hair. What d'ye say?"

"Here's your Mister Vasiloff on the wire," I says. "Step into booth number three, please."

"Tell him to cut himself a piece of cake," says Fighting Paddy. "I can talk to that bozo any time! He's the guy manages my apartment houses. D'ye think Hazel will see me?"

"You own apartment houses?" I ask him.

"Absolutely!" says Fighting Paddy carelessly. "Two on West End Avenoo and one on Lenox."

"I'm *positive* Hazel will see you!" I says.

A couple of nights later I staged a dinner party at one of the popular and costly cabarets so's Fighting

Paddy Leary could meet this ex-Tenth Avenue playmate, Hazel Killian.

The party came near being a bust, as the now up-stage and milk-fed Hazel at first indignantly denied she had ever resided on Tenth Avenue. Fighting Paddy, however, supplied her with a few facts and figures till she hurriedly shut off his rather intimate reminiscences by admitting it. But she only vaguely remembered him and treated him with exceeding coolness when she learned he was merely a prize fighter. I had tipped Monsieur Leary to work in some mention of his apartment houses in all his speeches and pretty soon it got results. Fighting Paddy's real estate holdings and the possibility of his becoming a world's champion appealed to the beautiful but cold-blooded Hazel, and before she parted from Fighting Paddy that night she agreed to let him call on her in London—if he defeated Mr. Grenadier Tompkins.

Well, Hazel and me finally tripped aboard the good ship *Mal de Mer* and set forth to dumfound Europe. It was my first sail past the Battery and once aboard the lugger I began to get homesick. However, there were so many things happened on this voyage that the blues had no chance with me. I'll remember that journey when I've forgotten my own name, honestly!

To begin with, there was the merry ship's company

which furnished not a few of the guffaws. The next time you go across, check me up on the following and see how many I've missed: The fresh air fiends who briskly promenaded the deck from the time they go aboard till they dock on the other side, walking around and around as if it was against the rules not to; the middle-aged ladies who sit in a row of steamer chairs and swap operations; the hardy globe-trotters who think they were on torpedoed ships during the war and retail their alleged adventures with gusto; the patronizing English stewards who can't understand anybody not wanting a dish of tea for breakfast and who "Very good!" you to death and "Thank you!" silly; the unhappy and unseaworthy travelers who drape themselves over the rail just as you are passing them en route to the dining salon, sending your appetite scurrying away; the reckless gamblers who enter the pool on the ship's daily run, bribe one of the crew for advance information and get a figure eighty miles away from the right one; the ain't-we-got-fun tourists who drag out all the gadgets for deck-games and play 'em with deadly seriousness, determined to enjoy themselves or die in the attempt; the rush to be placed at the captain's table; the fearful "entertainment" for the benefit of the Seamen's Union or something; the pests who drive the radio operator insane begging to be allowed to listen in; the cold-eyed, pale-faced gentlemen traveling alone

and earnestly endeavoring to correct that situation; the necking parties in dark nooks about the deck at night; etc., etc., and even etc.!

Personally, I got all fed up on the bounding main right after we passed Sandy Hook. For the next twenty-four hours I was a total loss and no hospital in the wide, wide world contained an inmate any sicker than me, really! The man who first said "See America First!" was probably the same kind of a sailor that I am. I'm satisfied Mr. Columbus was a marvel and that everybody in the navy is a hero. On the other hand, Hazel took to the sea like a porpoise and kept so irritatingly well and radiant that she got me red-headed. No matter how much the boat rolled, it never rolled so much that Hazel missed a meal, and when it was stormy she had 'em served in our cabin, where merely looking at the terrific array of food drove me to the great outdoors to—eh—meditate.

The first of a succession of sixty-four carat thrills came the third day out, just when I was beginning to recover from a life on the ocean wave. Hazel flounced into our cabin while I was dolling up to go on deck and take the voyagers' attention away from the deep blue sea.

"Hold everything!" she says breathlessly. "You'll never guess who's on board this boat."

"Fighting Paddy Leary!" I guessed promptly.

"No," says Hazel, "but the fellow he's going to fight is here—Grenadier Tompkins!"

"Well, what do you want me to do—get hysterical?" I says. "Where did you pick up all this scandal?"

"On deck," says Hazel, sitting down and reaching for my lipstick. "Where *you* ought to be, getting the nice salt air instead of sitting in this stuffy two-by-four like a she-hermit. Not only is the middleweight champion in our midst, but we've also got a flock of movie actors aboard. This Grenadier Tompkins is working in a picture they're filming right on the ship. I've met the director—a swell fellow—and Delancey Gregory, the star, and some of the girls, and——"

"You've been having lots of fun while I've been under cover, haven't you?" I butt in sarcastically.

"I always do," returns Hazel coolly, penciling her really lovely eyebrows. "The director, Gordon Daft—you've heard of him—thinks I'm just the type and wants me in his next big feature. He's sure I'll photograph wonderfully. He's *so* intelligent, Gladys! I told him you had some picture experience and he wants us both to appear in the film they're making here on the boat. Isn't that wonderful?"

"No, it isn't!" I says testily. "And if you think I'm going to work as a movie extra on my vacation, you're crazy! If I was you I'd keep away from that director. He's trying to put over a fast one!"

"Do you think *anything* is on the level?" demands Hazel.

"Yes," I says. "A billiard table."

Nevertheless, Hazel insisted on taking me out on deck and introducing me to Gordon Daft, the director, Grenadier Tompkins and Delancey Gregory, the star. We also met the girls, who grew a bit chilly towards us when Mr. Daft enthusiastically remarked that the three most beautiful things he ever saw in his life were the Yosemite Valley, Hazel and me. Delancey Gregory butted in to say that the director was unduly boosting the Yosemite. Grenadier Tompkins, high-cheek-boned, broken-nosed, sullen and swarthy, sneered at both of 'em and looked at me with ravenous eyes that never left me while I was on the deck.

Well, the combined pleadings of Hazel and her new found boy friend, Mr. Daft, swept away my objections to working on my vacation and we appeared in several scenes of the picture as atmosphere. As a matter of fact, I rather enjoyed the experience, which was very interesting as well as profitable and helped break up the monotony of the trip. The only thing I didn't like was Grenadier Tompkins, middleweight champion of the globe. He was positively impossible, honestly!

For some unknown reason this English exponent of the noble art of felonious assault considered himself irresistible, a regular Mephistopheles amongst the



ladies, and only in the privacy of my cabin could I turn around without bumping into him. I liked him and carboled the same way and practically told him so, but thinly veiled insults rolled off the Grenadier like rain-drops off oil. Really, the more I saw of the world's middleweight champion the more I hoped Fighting Paddy Leary would assassinate him, and I guess that was the only thing Hazel and I ever agreed on.

One day on deck when the modest Grenadier had told me for the twentieth time with reference to Fighting Paddy that he intended to "bash the blighter's fyce in!" I interrupted with a yawn. "You won't have a chance to bash anybody's fyce in, old deax, after Fighting Paddy Leary hits you—you'll be too busy!"

"Busy?" says the Grenadier. "Busy at what, may I arsk?"

"Busy picking splinters out of your shoulder blades!" I says sweetly.

He was fit to be tied and gave me a glare that sun-burnt my nose—but that didn't stop his chasing me.

Delancey Gregory, the movie star, also favored me with his kind attention, and I must say that in his case I didn't seek police protection. The tall and distinguished looking Delancey was as handsome as they come in his sex, and while not exactly as brilliant a conversationalist as Will Rogers or Georgie B. Shaw, he at least knew what it was all about, was an easy

dancer and fond of his mother. He wasn't a bit unpalatable, really. Being wild to crash into pictures, Hazel grew plenty friendly with the director and the four of us murdered many an hour in the braw bright moonlight nights on the deck. Grenadier Tompkins watched us sullenly with narrowed eyes and threatening mutterings, all of which Hazel thought were funny. I was worried, honestly. I saw a climax rapidly approaching and I don't like climaxes in which I figure!

The name of the movie they were assembling aboard ship was "Love and Passion"—a pleasing change from the usual suggestive titles, wasn't it? Anyhow, Grenadier Tompkins and Delancey Gregory were supposed to box in it, with Delancey knocking the world's middleweight champion out. I don't have to tell you they were plying the Grenadier with very important money to get him to agree with the author of that scenario!

Well, this soul-stirring fight was rehearsed dozens of times daily on the deck and *dozens* is a thrifty use of the descriptive. It was real thrilling to watch, too, don't think it wasn't! The Grenadier was no actor, he was a *fighter*, and he had a bad habit of losing all thought of the drama at the sound of the bell. The result of the champion's being unable to forget his art was that the director had to watch him carefully lest

he get too enthusiastic in the big fight scene. Whenever the fun began to wax too fast and furious, the leading man would cast a panic-stricken glance at the director, who would roar "*Cut!*" through his megaphone—that being the signal to stop the action.

Well, that little word "*Cut!*" was the one thing that Grenadier Tompkins thought was wrong with the movies, he told me bitterly when he cornered me on deck one night while we're waiting for the dinner bugle. He moaned that all he heard from morning to night was that bellowed "*Cut!*" It was fastening on what nerves he had and driving him triple cuckoo. He eats, drinks and sleeps the word. Walking along the deck, he will halt instantly and mechanically when some practical joker bawls "*Cut!*" Dressing, he'll stop and stand rigid; eating, he'll drop knife and fork; and any word that would make the Grenadier drop his knife while he was eating must certainly be engraved on his brain.

May Allah be praised, as they say in Yonkers, that I remembered all that—later!

The night before our noble vessel parked at Southampton there was a formal dance in the grand salon, and that gave me and Hazel a chance to make most of the other girls aboard wish they had come over by rail, or at least kept off a boat containing two such well filled evening gowns as we displayed. The sturdy

menfolk flocked around us like Ethiopians flock around a crap game, and I'll bet many a married man had to exercise some ingenuity in the bedtime story he gave friend wife after the ball was over! I danced with Delancey Gregory practically all night and that seemed to work our old friend Grenadier Tompkins into one of those cold furies you read about. Really, two or three times I thought the English athlete was going to prove he was a champion right on the ballroom floor, and finally, to avoid a fox pass, I gave him one waltz. A waltz was all I'd trust him with after the way his eyes devoured me. You can't do much batting out of turn in a waltz!

Well, the Grenadier and I have scarcely started to glide over a floor that would have delighted Maurice when right from behind us comes a sharp command "*Cut!*" Grenadier Tompkins blinked, instantly stopped dancing and his high-salaried arms fell from around my shrinking form as if he'd been shot. Before he can recover himself I am being whirled away in the embrace of the grinning Delancey Gregory. Honestly, I had to laugh—the whole thing was much funnier than it sounds. To think that the Grenadier had actually become such a slave to that oft repeated word that he'd even stop dancing with me when someone hollered it at him! Before the jam closed in around us I got one glimpse of his rage-contorted face—it was as white

as Delancey's dress shirt and it made me very thoughtful.

The next morning, our last aboard the ship, Grenadier Tompkins did his stuff!

The long and carefully rehearsed fight between Delancey Gregory and the Grenadier was "shot," but you'll never see it in the picture. While it lasted it exceeded the director's wildest hopes for action, as he afterwards gasped, but the finish was exceedingly different from the one written in the scenario. With murder in his heart, behind every crushing, cruel blow, behind every panting snarl from lips drawn back over his ragged teeth, Grenadier Tompkins gave poor Delancey Gregory an unmerciful beating in an almost unbelievably short space of time. Oh, it was terrible, really! Delancey was no cake-eater and stood up to it manfully when he realized what was happening, but he was just a movie actor and Grenadier Tompkins was a professional prize fighter—a *champion*. Honestly, my blood boils even now when I think of it! This English brute broke Delancey's classic nose, split his ear, blacked his eyes and otherwise disfigured him before the stunned director snapped out of it and stopped the Grenadier as a bullet would stop him with a frantically roared "*Cut!*"

But the damage had been done and it would be many weeks before Delancey Gregory could go on with the

picture. Grenadier Tompkins took leave of us with a snarling: "You arsked for h'action, you blighters, h'and you got it!"

Really, I could have been given thirty years at hard labor for what I thought of Mr. Grenadier Tompkins after that exhibition of sportsmanship! Hazel was as burnt up as I was and we talked about hardly anything else all the way up to London, in those little trick trains that look like something you'd bring home to Sonny for Xmas. A couple of medicos fixed up the battered leading man and the company came up to King George's home town with us, all of us fussing over Delancey and making him as comfortable as it's possible for anyone to be with a sirloin steak over each eye. Darn it, I liked the way he took it! Not a whine out of him; he was just sorry the picture would have to be held up. Mr. Daft, the director, kept swearing he'd murder Grenadier Tompkins in cold blood, and all of a sudden while he was madly raving, a scheme to get even with the middleweight champion struck me like a flash. It was a daring plan, and, yes, a crazy one—but I was satisfied if it was successful it would mark Grenadier Tompkins "Paid!"

I took Mr. Daft away from the others and told him about it. He didn't say a word for a full minute, and then he suddenly slapped my knee, immediately apologizing—oh, *he* was all right.

"Gladys," he says, "what you are doing answering phone calls in a hotel, I don't know, but it's your own business and I won't bother you with foolish questions. Personally, I think your scheme is absolutely insane—but I also think it's just about insane enough to work!"

Be patient.

Me and Hazel had been in dear old London just about long enough to lose a fortune trying to tell a shilling from a half-crown when we came back to our hotel one day from a sight-seeing excursion to find a note from no less than Fighting Paddy Leary. Inside the note were two ringside tickets for his championship bout with Grenadier Tompkins at the National Sporting Club the following night. Honestly, I must show you that note. Look:

I'm fighting this mug on three days traneing in this slab after a brutal ride on the ocean, but I'll take him just the same. Hope you had a good trip over and aint forgot your promise to let me pay you a call. These is the best ducats I could promote. They're ringside and you kids is got to doll up. They wear the old soup and fish at the fights over here, kin you beat that? Wishing myself the best of luck,

Yours,

FIGHTING PADDY LEARY

Quick work and equally fast money got Mr. Daft a ringside seat next to ours, and they were as close as

you could get without actually being in the ring itself. We were what you might call sitting pretty. Taking Fighting Paddy's etiquette hint, we were dolled up within an inch of our lives, as was everybody else, for that matter. There were no more people present than there are in Boston, and I question seriously if I'll ever be in such good company again as I was at that prize fight. All around us was Duke This and Lord That, and not ten feet away in a box was the Prince of Wales.

Honestly, that noted and likable young gentleman simple panicked Hazel! My charming girl friend could see nothing else. She just sat there, her eyes mucilaged on the boy like a starving collie outside a butcher shop.

"So that's the Prince of Wales?" she murmurs. "Well, he's certainly a cute kid! I wish he'd give us a tumble—they say he craves American girls."

That irritated me. "Listen, young lady," I says, "it wouldn't do him any good if he did give *me* a tumble, because I wouldn't go out with him any more than I would with any stranger, prince or no prince!"

"Good for you!" says Mr. Daft.

"So you wouldn't step out with the Prince of Wales, heh?" sneers Hazel. "Apple sauce!"

Further discussion along these lines was interrupted



by the entrance of Grenadier Tompkins and his retinue of attendants. The Grenadier received a polite reception—the customers don't go in for the vocal display at the National Sporting Club of London like they do at the Bowery A. C. It just isn't done, old bean! Then our athlete, Fighting Paddy Leary, looking pale and serious, entered the ring. There were plenty fans from the colonies present besides us and they gave Fighting Paddy a welcoming yell that must have shaken the Tower of London and certainly shook the dignity of the Londoners. I saw many a reproving frown.

Fighting Paddy's first act was to peer anxiously around until he saw us, and then a broad grin lighted up his face. Hazel gave him a brief mechanical smile, then her eyes went right back to the royal box. I fluttered my handkerchief encouragingly and Mr. Daft, all excited, called "Knock him stiff, kid!"

Fighting Paddy nodded back, very serious again.

"Doesn't he look determined?" I whispered, nudging Hazel.

"I'll say he does!" she says with a sigh. "And just think—some day he'll be King of England!"

Mr. Daft laughed outright and I gave her up in disgust.

Well, the movie cameras that were to film the championship fight are set up around the ring, the scowling Grenadier Tompkins and the equally scowling Fight-

ing Paddy Leary are introduced, a bell rings—and the panic is on!

I'll never forget that first round, and Grenadier Tompkins will never forget the second. Honestly, for three minutes the champion did everything to poor Fighting Paddy Leary but stick a knife in him, and I sat on the edge of my seat biting my lips and seeing again through moist eyes this burly Englishman battering Delancey Gregory aboard the ship. Fighting Paddy hit the floor either eight or twenty-seven times, and according to the screaming Mr. Daft and the rest of our countrymen present most of the blows that put him there were exceedingly foul. Even some of the Englishmen sitting around us were saying in conversational tones, "I say, fight fair, Grenadier!" or "Mister Referee, that was a bit low!" Twice Fighting Paddy stopped falling long enough to file personal complaints with the referee, but he got no service at all!

When Paddy staggered to his corner at the end of the first round, really, he looked like the wreck of the Hesperus. His seconds worked over him frantically, while the Americans kept up a continual din, mostly howls at the referee, who paid not the slightest attention. In the midst of this confusion I happened to glance at the royal box in time to see the Prince whisper to one of his companions. The man nodded, bowed,

got up and came over to the referee. There was a short confab and then that official walked over to Grenadier Tompkins and spoke most earnestly to him. What he said I don't know, but he was evidently laying down the law and they listened very respectfully. This little incident brought some rousing cheers from the Americans for Mr. Wales.

"Did you see that?" says Mr. Daft excitedly. "The Prince has told that yegg referee to warn Tompkins about fouling. Say—the Prince is a real guy!"

"Of course he's a real guy," says Hazel, like she and the Prince were playmates. "Didn't I always say he was?"

The gong for the second round sent Fighting Paddy staggering to the middle of the ring, badly hurt but still game. There was no quit in any way connected with him, but that first round beating and those foul blows had ruined him. Grenadier Tompkins began pounding him again from where he left off before, and Fighting Paddy slowly gave ground, feebly pawing at the cruelly grinning Grenadier, until they were both up against the ropes right over where we were sitting.

That is what I had been waiting for since this carnival of assault and battery began! I nudged Mr. Daft and he nodded nervously but understandingly. Fighting Paddy missed a couple of desperate blows, and the

horrible crunch of the Grenadier's fists against his face and body could be heard to the farthest corner of the place. Honestly, it looked all over but the shouting, and Paddy gazed despairingly down at us above the Grenadier's shoulders. The Grenadier hit Paddy with one glove and pulled back the other for the finishing glow. I felt it was now or never!

"Do your stuff!" I hissed in Mr. Daft's ear. Mr. Daft yanked a small megaphone from under his coat and took a deep breath.

"*Cut!*" he roars.

As Shakespeare once remarked, that was the most unkindest cut of all! Grenadier Tompkins stopped short at the familiar command in the familiar voice. The clicking of the cameras about the ring seemed to come to his ears for the first time. Mechanically he dropped his arms. The entire crowd was now on its feet, yes, dignified English and all, howling itself hoarse. *Wam!* The amazed but delighted Fighting Paddy Leary swung a terrible blow at the champion's jaw. It knocked Grenadier Tompkins as cold as thirty-eight dollars' worth of frosted chocolate, and if they hadn't swept him up he'd be there yet!

On the way back to our hotel, after Hazel had witnessed the Prince of Wales shake Fighting Paddy Leary's hand and she had agreed to dine with the new king of the middleweights the following night, I asked

her what she thought of the fight and its sensational finish.

Hazel yawns sleepily.

"I think," she says, "the Prince of Wales is certainly one swell looking fellow!"

## CHAPTER VI

### WILLIAM TELLS

ACCORDING to Mr. Titus Livy, who used to say it with epigrams in dear old Padua, experience is the teacher of fools. Titus left this vale of tears some nineteen hundred years ago, but the school of experience originally founded by Eve and her apple addict confederate is still doing business at the same old stand.

Me and Hazel graduated with high honors in Paris!

Speaking of anchovies, no doubt you are wondering what a couple of such Campfire Girls as we are were doing in mischievous Paris. Well, I'll set your suspicions at rest. After Hazel pegged the Prince of Wales in a box at the prize-fight and fell heavily in love with the heir presumptive, she audibly wished he'd do some presuming in *her* direction, such as all the vaudeville sister acts who have been across coyly confess was *their* delightful experience. But by an odd coincidence, Hazel failed to become the Prince's weak-

ness and we fled to France to escape the well-meant pestering of Fighting Paddy Leary.

Really, I don't blame the gamesters who try to swim the English Channel, as I'm satisfied *that* method has it all over the trip via boat! If there's anything rougher than that dizzy body of water separating England from France, then Dempsey had better not fight it! Honest to Kansas, we led the life of a tennis ball on that voyage across—just tossed all over the place. I wanted to go by plane, but Hazel objects to them because they go up in the air. Anyhow, we finally made the perilous journey and landed in the country made famous by Sarah Bernhardt, Joan of Arc, Anna Held, Napoleon, "Couvert \$1.50" and sliced potatoes dipped in boiling grease. Our next imitation was to board a train for art's home town, and of course the minute we stepped out of the Gare St.-Lazaire, Hazel pulls that ancient gag first breathed admiringly by Helen of Troy, viz., "So this is Paris!"

This was our original visit to gay Paree and in spite of the fact that we'd both invested in Baedekers and copies of "French in a Twinkling," we were as strange as a pair of deck-hands in a drawing room. Honestly, we didn't know what it was all about and couldn't tell a franc from a doubloon, *oo la la* from *n'est-ce pas*, or ros' biff from *vin ordinaire*. However, we fitted a taxi around us and bounded over to a hotel I picked out

because it was right across the *rue* from the place where we'd have to draw on our letters of credit from time to time. The nearness to our pieces-of-eight was all this inn had to recommend it and, really, the prices were positively brutal!

Well, for years both me and Hazel had heard what a wild and wicked village Paris was and we set forth to look it over with delicious little quivers of anticipation romping up and down a couple of backs that would give Kitty Gordon pause. We're rarin' to go where deviltry was rampant and we wished to be thoroughly shocked or get our money back, one or the other!

However, as neither of us is in the habit of commuting between Gotham and Paris, we didn't know where to look for a thrill. Several sightseeing invitations were filed with us by the usual tourist parties from Idiotic, Nebraska, and Senseless, Iowa, but these were rejected with thanks. We'd watched these scissor-bills perform on the way over and neither of us had any desire to deliberately take punishment in habit-forming doses.

A sign outside the hotel manager's office boasted that they had somebody inside on exhibition who could speak English. That was a barefaced lie, as we found out when we interviewed this braggart. His name was Duprez and he rolled a nasty eye at us and shrugged a vicious shoulder, but honestly he spoke English as if



he had picked it up in Afghanistan! M. Duprez gave us the only two chairs in his office and bowed incessantly, while Hazel opened her "French in a Twinkling" and hastily scanned the pages.

"Listen, Mister Monseer," she says, "parley vous English, siv vous play?"

"But yes," says this master mind, "and Mademoiselle spiks vairy well Français, no is it not?"

"I love that!" says Hazel, a bit steamed. "What are you doing—clowning?"

"Oh, not of the all, Mademoiselle, not of the all!" says Dizzy. "Of how do you must have my assistance?"

"We crave excitement!" says Hazel. "We got a yen to see Paris and see it right, get me? Eventually, why not now? Where do we go?"

"Ah!" says Duprez, with plenty hand waving. "I would offer the Champs Elysées, the Louvre, the Arc-de-Triomphe, la Place de la Concorde, le Palais de Justice, le——"

"For crying out loud!" butts in Hazel impatiently. "We don't wish souvenir post-cards, we want to step out and get some laughs. We'd like to personally inspect the Latin Quarter, the Montmarte, the Dead Rat Café, the Follies—ch—Bergerear, or what have you?"

A wicked grin appeared slowly on the face of M. Duprez and he commenced to swell up like a mump.

He gazed longingly first at me and then at Hazel and winked, quite suggestively. Hazel's lovely eyebrows lowered and then without any preliminary she stepped over and soundly slapped the gentleman's face.

"Keep your thoughts out of your eyes, Frenchie!" she says, three icicles on each word.

To my great surprise, our charming *vis-à-vis* didn't appear to be the least bit offended at being smacked in the profile. Really, he seemed to take it as a matter of course and simply distributed a pleasant smile evenly amongst us both. Then, having failed to build himself up with us, he suggested that we hire a guide for a week and we'd see all the Paris we could take. We decided that was a good thought and ordered one. Still smiling, Duprez pressed a button. It worked and pretty soon in came Mr. Guide.

Honestly, this specimen was about the size and complexion of a demi-tasse and looked like an escaped murderer, hungry for another victim. But Duprez assured us that the newcomer knew more about Paris than Victor Hugo and likewise spoke sixty-nine languages, or two more than there are. We found out later that he spoke the last two better than the others. He was a wow, no fooling!

Hazel sternly commands M. Duprez to proposition our guide in English, so we'll know whether we're getting a pushing around or not.

“But *certainment* Mademoiselle!” says Duprez and turns to the guide. “Pig!” he says courteously, “prepare now to escort those lady from here to there with the utmost speed and precision. *Comprenez vous?* Do you afford them enough of the merriment they will enrich you with two hundred francs. Show them the this and show them the that. Do you but call me one improper name, I will have those gendarmes at your heels. *Allez!*”

The guide let forth a moan and wagged his head from side to side. “Playmate of dogs!” he says to M. Duprez, with characteristic old world politeness, “*cochon*, descendant of thieves—I ask *three* hundred francs for those *magnifique* service I do for those beautiful mademoiselles. Name of a name of a name of a——”

“We’ll give you *one* hundred francs and not another nickel if you cry your eyes out!” I cut him off. “Come on, guide, do your stuff!”

“Yes,” says Hazel, stamping her foot, “finish your act some other time. Let’s go places!”

“*Allons!*” says the guide—and the panic was on!

Well, to dwarf a tall story, we frittered away almost a week and two barrels of francs seeing Paris, and really I must say that we were a bit disappointed with the results. The well known town just didn’t click! Most of the time it rained day and night in a way that

nobody but Noah could appreciate and we both caught beautiful colds. The population conducted itself quite decorously, as far as me and Hazel were able to see—musical comedies, Americanized French farces and joke books to the contrary. In fact, Hazel gloomily remarked that she'd had much more fun in Paterson, N. J., and she don't think the *vin ordinaire* of La Belle France is a fearful lot better than the drug store gin of La Belle United States. Well, really, that's what I call carrying patriotism to the extreme. I've been in Paterson and I've also tasted that pharmaceutical poison!

Our guide, who got intimate enough with us to disclose his name as Georges and his home as Morocco, took us to theaters and cafés in Montmartre alleged to be the deadfalls of the apaches and their wild women. Tomato sauce! As Hazel and me are case-hardened Broadwayites we found the jollity and attempts at the daring a bit forced. To tell you the truth, the greatest excitement we were having was trying to order a meal in a language we neither spoke, read, wrote nor understood. Honestly, the so called wicked Montmartre as displayed to us by Georges of Paris and Morocco reminded me of Philadelphia with a bun on!

We were fed up with the French capital and about ready to check out of it when along came William and we learned about Paris from him.

Hazel blew into our hostelry from a shopping expedition one afternoon with a gentleman escort, and as that was not what she told me she was going shopping for, I sat erect and took observation. Busy doing nothing, I'd been waiting for her in the reception room and that's where she introduced me to her find as William Richardson Van Cleve II, son of the billionaire near-beer king. I threw him a smile and shook hands pleasantly enough, but that didn't mean I was positive he was really as advertised. Bill was young and distinguished looking and there was something about his face that was strangely familiar to me. I was satisfied I had seen this fellow somewhere before, but I couldn't remember where. Ever have a face slip your memory like that and annoy you to death?

Strangely enough, a swiftly passing glint of recognition likewise lighted up William's eyes as he saw me—in fact, we both remarked on the thing but were unable to place each other, *then!* When the charming Hazel introduced me to William as "Gwendolyn Calhoun, of the Virginia Calhouns," I was a bit startled to say the least! A few minutes afterwards I got another shock when Hazel's heavy boy friend called her "Miss Deveraux." Although I was plenty amused and much mystified by this strange thomas foolery on her part, I remained loyal to the young lady and played

up to the deception, though intending to ask her for the answer at my earliest convenience.

William worked fast and managed to make a dinner engagement with us for the following night—not a difficult feat. Almost immediately afterwards he bowed out, carelessly remarking that he must hasten away to cable his brokers “regarding a million dollar deal” he was negotiating in the rue Wall, New York. As William airily made this announcement, the hypnotized Hazel, who hates money the same way J. P. Morgan dislikes a ticker, looked at him swooningly. But really, as I’ve met two hundred thousand of these boys at the St. Moe switchboard whose patter is the same as William’s, I regarded his vanishing shapely back through narrowed eyes and began to get thoughtful. Oh, lots thoughtful!

In the privacy of our boudoir that night, Hazel furnished me with a complete inventory of William Richardson Van Cleve II. From Hazel’s prejudiced viewpoint, Bill was something more than the feline’s haberdashery and she had stumbled across him under double romantic—almost movie—circumstances. While shopping in one of Monsieur Rue’s cute little alleys, she had mislaid her sense of direction, and her inability to talk any more Paris than a rabbit had made her predicament real serious. As if that wasn’t more than ample to drive our heroine to distraction, along came

one of those desperate apaches we'd been dying to see, snatched Hazel's purse and was running away with it, when Hon. William Richardson Van Cleve II appeared on the scene. William ran the thief ragged, caught him, cuffed him soundly and restored the wide-eyed Hazel's purse. You can't laugh that off and Will knew it, so still working with smooth and effective speed he then introduced himself to Hazel and took her to luncheon. There you are—simple, wasn't it?

But really I've learned to become millionaire-proof and was only mildly interested in William, who so far had thrilled me about as much as it thrills a camel to look at some sand. What I was exceedingly interested in was in keeping the fun-loving Hazel from harm in gay Patee. So I cut in on her cooings about William the great.

"Listen, young lady," I says severely, "I have a few questions to ask you. What's the big idea of tagging me 'Gwendolyn Calhoun of the Virginia Calhouns' and telling that big—eh—your boy friend William that your name's Deveraux?"

Hazel smiles like a baby—an impish one.

"What's wrong with those names?" she asks me. "I think they're real cute."

"Outside of the fact that they're not ours, there's nothing the matter with them," I admit. "But if you

wanted to give William a run around why not say we were Cleopatra and Salome and be done with it?"

"Too common," pronounces Hazel. "And anyhow, neither of us are those kind of girls and you know it! But you take Miss Deveraux and Miss Calhoun and there's a couple of names that *mean* something. There's —well, there's *stuff* to them, if you know what I mean. They're aristocratic and they just ooze Fifth Avenue. I certainly wasn't going to tell William Richardson Van Cleve, second, heir to the near-beer millions, that I'm Hazel Killian, a show girl, and you're merely a phone operator!"

"Why not?" I demanded, commencing to burn a trifle. "I've been connected with some of the best families in New York!"

"By telephone!" sneers Hazel cattily. "No, the switchboard operator and the chorus girl thing is out and if you tell William different I'll be off you for life. I'm not going to kill this cotillion leader's interest at the very start, when I'm more than an even money bet right now to drag him to the altar!"

"I think you're hysterical myself!" I says. "If you wanted to offer a tasty cognomen for William's enjoyment, why didn't you introduce me by my *real* name —isn't there a world of class to Gladys Murgatroyd?"

Hazel looked pensive. "That name *does* smack of the drawing room," she says, "but then it also has



a phony sound. It's always struck me as apple sauce and I wouldn't risk it with such a judge of aristocratic names as anyone entitled William Richardson Van Cleve second must be!"

Don't you love that?

Well, honestly, Hazel raved about sweet William until something like two A.M. Her lifelong ambition had been to pull a Follies, viz., a first class elopement with the handsome handicap of some wealthy family, and Mr. Van Cleve II looked like a wonderful opportunity.

"Maybe we'll continue around the world from Paris on our honeymoon," she remarks dreamily. "I'd love to see the road to Mandalay that Shakespeare wrote that song about."

"It wasn't Shakespeare, it was Longfellow," I corrected her. "Do you mean to tell me that this William asked you to marry him on a three hour acquaintance?"

"Well—yes and no," says Hazel. "He hasn't asked, but he's certainly looked matrimony and don't think he hasn't!"

I really couldn't give Hazel an argument on that. My girl friend has baby-stared into plenty masculine corneas and she certainly should know!

Nevertheless, I wasn't satisfied that William Richardson Van Cleve II was all he appeared to be on the surface. Somehow I distrusted his too self-assured manner and I was no little suspicious of his nonchal-

ant use of the noun "millions." The familiarity of his face puzzled me, too. I began to feel some real alarm for my enthusiastic roommate.

"Hazel," I says seriously, "you better go slow or you'll win yourself a lot of grief. Paris is full of these sleek young wolves who prey on innocent little girls like us. I'll bet the first thing you know that synthetic millionaire's son will be putting the bee on you for beaucoup francs. He——"

"What an awful squawker you're getting to be!" butts in Hazel, burning up. "Always putting in a rap for somebody. I imagine you think Dempsey used a hypodermic on Firpo! Listen, tend to your own knitting. I'm nobody's fool and any member of the needless sex who could get a dime from me could also send a flock of camels galloping through the eye of a needle!"

The debate over William got so warm that I finally turned the light out and stumbled asleep, leaving the angry Hazel talking matters over with her own sweet self.

However, although me and Hazel have known each other personally for years we're still good friends, so as usual the next morning we declared an armistice, spending most of the afternoon dolling up for our dinner engagement with William. We'd each had the presence of mind to imbibe in evening gowns of a most

intoxicating nature, and both of us can wear anything and start an epidemic of neck-stretching anywheres from beach to ballroom. When William arrived in immaculate evening dress, as the saying goes, he really seemed to be a bit dazed by the combined effect of me and Hazel on his vision. He bucked up manfully, however, and took us to *Ciro's* for nourishment.

Well, except for the irritation I felt at being unable to remember where I had seen this young lady-killer before, the evening was a success of the first water. Me and Hazel attracted as much attention as a lump of sugar would from a famished fly, the handsome William was two feet past perfection as a host, the dinner was a famine victim's dream and the wine exceedingly better than the Long Island Scotch current in New York. As I was supposed to be something from Virginia, I switched my patter from Broadwayese to "you-all" and "suh," and I was careful to call a door "doah." This had Hazel on the verge of convulsions but seemed to goal Mr. William.

Will spoke French as if he'd been born in the Louvre, so we wisely left the selection of the foodstuffs to him. That was certainly a good thought, because the near-beer king's descendant turned out to be an artist of the old school at making a menu mean something. Never in my young life have I witnessed anyone order food with the care and deliberation that Mr. William Rich-

ardson Van Cleve II used to pick each dainty from the bill of fare. Honestly, you'd think our lives depended on the result of each decision he made from soup to nuts. He captured the open respect of the haughty head waiter, while our own *garçon* fairly fawned on such a master at eating. The various wines, different for each course, came in to William in their original baskets to be discussed at length; the meat, fish and fowl were first brought in uncooked direct from the admiring chef, etc. Oh, this boy was good, he was for a positive fact!

Hazel couldn't get her adoring eyes to focus anywhere but on William during the entire evening and even I began to get slightly impressed. The young man's table talk was chiefly financial—really, he used dollar marks for punctuation. According to his own story, he squandered six months of each fiscal year in Europe, mostly at one of his father's flock of châteaux and villas. He wished we could see his male parent's little place at Nice, or perhaps the villa in Italy would be more interesting to a couple of aristocrats like us, or again we might find the castle in Burgundy more fascinating. Honestly, he had us dizzy!

By the time we began to toy with the coffee, William had reached the top of his game. Waxing confidential, he remarked that his billionaire father headed a syndicate that was negotiating with the German government

to pay their debt to the Allies. Just one thing held matters up, he confided to the breathless Hazel. His dear old dad insisted on fifty-two percent interest and the sweet old Germans couldn't see into it. We mustn't breathe a word of this, though—might cause international complications and that sort of thing. This sensational insight into diplomatic affairs put Hazel right into a trance and if William had asked her to wed him at that minute he would have certainly got service! All I could think of was that dish you make by boiling apples.

At first William divided his attention evenly between us, but finding me the hardest to promote he aimed his heavy artillery at the already overboard Hazel. They got along like brandy and soda. After the feast he suggested that we go to places and dance. No argument there. We accepted a taxi and the future money king took us to see what he called "the real Paris." He seemed to know the successful French hamlet like Nanook knows the North. William showed us all the devilish places we'd read about but had failed dismally to find ourselves, and really he spent important money like the next morning he was going to be executed. Most of his tips must have caused the recipients to throw up their jobs and open their own places, and said tips came from a bankroll that would baffle a particularly agile greyhound when it came to leaping over

it. When he said by-by to us at our hotel around four A.M. we were forced to admit we'd had a marvelous time. Hazel had a field day kidding me about my suspicions of the young man, and as I like fairness I had to confess that to date William checked up as bonded goods.

Well, William then began rushing us in deadly earnest, and honestly, trying to get rid of him was like trying to get rid of a cold in the head. He said it with everything from flowers to bonbons and was likewise a constant caller at our hotel, by phone or in person. His unusual mastery of the French language was of wonderful assistance in our enjoyment of our stay in Paris and his knowledge of where to go for the laughs didn't hurt either. I wanted to check out and leave the field clear for Hazel, but Hazel was indignant at the idea of me being a wall flower and William added protests that sounded sincere enough. So the three of us stepped high, wide and handsome all over Paris. Will was a glutton for punishment, taking us motoring, dining, dancing, to all the shows, fashion centers and even to the races, where we won a thousand francs each on his tip in the Grand Prix de Paris. Hazel, of course, was just one big smile surrounded by girl and even I had to grudgingly admit that as an all-around entertainer William Richardson Van Cleve II was mighty good company!

"I'd like your boy friend better, though, Hazel," I told my little pal as we prepared to retire the night following the races, "if only he would talk about something else once in a while besides himself, his family and his father's uncountable millions. I crave a little variety in conversation, if you know what I mean."

Hazel is pouring herself into a negligée that belonged in *La Vie Parisienne* and nowhere else. She sneers at me.

"Blah!" she says, "He's spent about three thousand dollars keeping us from yawning since we met him. I don't care *what* he talks about!"

That's the tip-off on Hazel.

A few evenings later we had a date with the faithful William to go motoring, but Hazel broke out with a terrible headache in the afternoon and by nightfall she was pretty low. So the auto ride was out as far as she was concerned, but she insisted that I go along with our mutual friend and not stay in on her account. She said she wished to write some letters and go to bed early; also, she most earnestly desired me to go with William so that I could find out what he really thought of her and report back. Really, I didn't like the job, but I do like Hazel, so with some misgivings I gave Will a treat by accepting.

*O sole mia!*

We rode to a cute little inn on the outskirts of Paris

and tore off another one of William's marvelous dinners, with some wine that was positively heavenly. I indulged very sparingly in the beverage. But William tied into that wine as if he's just staggered in from a week on the desert, and after either the third or the fifteenth bottle he got what I have often heard described as "mellow." He moved over beside me and captured my hand. I told him to be himself and drew it away, when to my great indignation he tried to kiss me. Boys will be boys!

When I repulsed William, he got more indignant than me. He said he couldn't understand why I should object to a mere innocent kiss, *especially as Hazel hadn't!* That last boast made me sit up and I regarded him with blazing eyes.

"You have kissed Hazel?"

"Dozens of times!" says William airily, and pours himself another Pol Roger.

Well, honestly, I was simply furious and I just sat there and glared at him. It wasn't jealousy of Hazel that got me red-headed, as William failed to panic me, but to me the most contemptible thing in the wide wide world is the Lothario who kisses and tells! I jumped up and ordered a rather frightened William to take me back to the hotel at once. All the way home he did nothing but beg me not to tell Hazel he had wanted to kiss me, but I gave him no satisfaction. Outwardly



I was cold and non-committal, but inwardly I was fit to be tied.

After thinking everything over, I made up my mind to rid Hazel of the kissing William, who I was positive would only make her unhappy. Knowing Hazel's disposition and temperament I realized it would be double useless to attempt to get her to give William the air on *my* say so, so I determined to bear down on William myself and make him like it.

When I got to our room, Hazel reared up sleepily in bed. "Well," she yawns, "did William talk about me?"

I gave her a queer smile. "I'll say he talked about you!" I says—and nothing more.

The very next morning I sent a long cable to a trustworthy friend in New York asking him to cable back the following to William Richardson Van Cleve II:

Your escapades with women must come to an end. Have stopped your income and you can expect no further financial assistance unless you return home on next boat.

FATHER

That, I expected, would be the end of Bill as far as me and Hazel were concerned!

A couple of nights later William took us to dinner at

his hotel and the cable was delivered to him at the table right before the dessert. Honestly, I was just quivering with excitement and never took my eyes off his face while he read it. For the shortest of moments William's brow contracted and then he flashed us a dazzling smile.

"By Jove!" says William, "I've just made half a million in wheat. We'll drink all the wine in Paris tonight!"

With sparkling eyes Hazel leans over and pats his back, laughing joyously, but I was absolutely dumfounded by his 42-carat nerve! Of course I knew how that cable actually read, since I composed it myself, and I had half a mind to ask him to let me see it and then show him up. On second thought I decided not to for various reasons, one of which was the thousand-to-one shot that William really had put over a fast one in the stock market.

However, the next day while Hazel was out on one of her endless shopping trips, William paid me a call. Really, he was an entirely different person from the boasting, free-spending, smiling young man of the past. His first act was to pull out the cable he got the night before and show it to me without a word. As I expected, it read exactly as I had written it. He then handed me another one, saying he had just received it. This one read:

Return home at once. Your father has disinherited you.

MOTHER

Honestly, I was positively flabbergasted by this coincidence. Imagine his getting a legitimate cable making him a total loss just after I had faked one doing the same thing! I regarded him coldly.

"Well?" I says.

"Well," says William, "the funny part of this is that I have no father and no mother. I'm an orphan!"

Heavens above!

While all I could do was to stare at him in amazement, William told his tale. It was one for the book, it was for a fact! His name was not William Richardson Van Cleve II, it was William Simmons, and he was by no means the heir to the near-beer billions; *he was a waiter!*

As if that wasn't enough, this young man calmly tells me he knows I'm a phone operator and no "Calhoun of Virginia" and that Hazel is a show girl, because he saw us both frequently when he worked in the main dining room of the Hotel St. Moe. That's the reason his face was so familiar to me. It also explains his ability to plan a kingly dinner—why shouldn't a waiter know how to order food?

"William," I says, when our hero stopped momentarily for breath, "with your undiluted nerve you should

be able to sell electric fans to the Eskimos! Why put on the dog with us and tell us all those fairy tales about yourself?"

"It's been my ambition for years to come to Paris," he says, coolly taking a cigarette from a box of Hazel's on the dresser, "and this trip represents my life savings. You girls happened to come along and I put over a harmless deception to satisfy a romantic yearning, that's all. Besides, didn't you also deceive *me* about *your* social position?"

"Well, really—I—we——" I began to stammer, a bit confused.

"That's all right," interrupts William, with a lordly wave of his hand. "Don't apologize. I guess we're about even—except for one thing. I blew all my money on you and your girl friend and now I'm flat broke! I don't know anybody in Paris, and as the high life is all over for me I must get back to the United States and go to work again. If you'll loan me the fare, I'll look you up at the St. Moe when you come back and repay it. If you don't, I'll just about starve to death, that's all!

Honestly, as I sat there thinking this amazing young man over I was as much sorry for him as I was angry. After all, he did spend a flock of money on me and Hazel. He pleaded with me for nearly an hour, and though I felt I was insane to do it I finally loaned

him three hundred dollars on his promise to go back to America at once.

Not two hours later a messenger comes up to my room with a neat little package. In it is three hundred dollars and the following note:

After leaving you I bumped into an old friend who loaned me the fare, so I'm returning your money with thanks. Will see you at the St. Moe. Meanwhile don't flirt with any more millionaires' sons. Be good!

WILLIAM

I had scarcely finished reading the missive and counting the money when Hazel flounces into the room. I thought I might as well get things over and be done with it.

"Hazel," I says, "I'm awfully sorry for you, but you might as well forget about William. He's gone out of our lives forever!"

To my great surprise Hazel appears highly pleased.

"Good!" she says. "I was afraid we'd have trouble giving that big clown the gate, but my scheme must have worked!"

"*Your* scheme?" I says dizzily.

"Sure!" says Hazel complacently. "I sent him a cable supposed to have come from his mother, saying he was cut off without a dime!"

Honestly, I'm at the gasping stage!

"I thought you were overboard over William," I says. "What happened?"

Hazel hesitates and looks confused.

"Well, Gladys," she says, "I—of course, what you do is your own business and—I—oh, well I just got disgusted with him when he tried to kiss me and said he had kissed you!"

Then we got together and compared notes on this gentleman.

I told Hazel of William's confession and when the astounded Hazel learned she had been seeing Paris with a waiter, really, she went right up in flames. She raved around the room for half an hour and then suddenly grew quite calm.

"Well, one consolation is that Mr. Waiter will be in the Bastile here tonight!" she says. "He took me for three hundred to get back to the United States, and being sore over that stuff about him kissing you I gave him the money in marked bills. He's going to be arrested for masquerading as Van Cleve's son, and when they find that marked sugar on him—good night!"

At that I sat right up straight in my chair. A wild thought had suddenly struck me.

"Hazel," I asked with deadly calm "when did you loan William that three hundred?"

"About two hours ago. Why?"

"Just a minute!" I answered and dashed into the other room.

Feverishly I opened my purse and dragged out the money William had sent back to me. As I feared, *each bill was marked with Hazel's initials!*

Well, it didn't take me long to figure things out, and although I was plenty enraged, I had to give William credit for a rather cute performance. He had borrowed three hundred from each of us, saw that Hazel's money was marked and promptly used it to pay *me* back! Not bad, what? My sense of humor rose above my anger and I handed the raging Hazel \$150.

"Hazel," I says, "I don't blame you for being sore. That's the way *I* feel too. But I really think we might as well split William between us and charge the difference to experience!"

"And he told me we'd spend our honeymoon in Camembert!" moans Hazel, cramming away the bills and wiping her tearful eyes.

"You're crazy," I says. "Camembert's a cheese!"

"Well," says Hazel, "so was William!"

## CHAPTER VII

### FOR THE LOVE OF MIKE!

A COUPLE or three days ago me and Hazel, suddenly getting a rush of gray matter to the head, decided we should begin overhauling ourselves, mentally and—excuse me—physically. Our first imitation was to appear *au naturel* before some assorted and exorbitant specialists on this and that, passing the critical eyes of the medicos with flying colors. In fact there was plenty color flying in our cheeks when we left!

Well, as the charming doctors enthusiastically corroborated the report of our pier glass, we saw no reason to attempt improving two such physical masterpieces as ourselves, so we took up the subject of mental culture by hauling off and buying a set of the literary classics. Incidentally we ran into a booklegger from who Hazel bought a few suppressed gems at twenty-five dollars each and delivery right to your home in the original covers. Most of them were just one-half of one percent to *me*, really!



Being on the wagon as far as moonshine novels are concerned, I personally began getting scholarly with a cunning little volume entitled "Evangeline" from the busy pen of Harry Longfellow. None of it rhymes but it's much better than the film. Hazel said it was apple sauce to her and a steal on veronal for narcotic purposes. Still, as I twice caught Hazel cheating by passing up the dignified immorals—no, I don't mean *immortals*—for a copy of "Racy Stories," I can't give her much as a critic.

However, in wading gamely through "Evangeline" I came across the following:

Happy are thou, as if every day thou hadst picked up a horseshoe!

Really, I was a bit surprised to find that Mr. Longfellow was superstitious, everybody speaks so well about him. But mentioning horseshoes reminds me of Mike McGann and Mike McGann reminds me of so many things that—well, I'll tell you about Miguel and the equine's boots.

If you laugh it's your own fault!

We stumbled across Mike McGann on the way back from Europe. Our meeting with the highly entertaining Michael was a bit unconventional and that sort of thing, I mean to say, as the jolly old Londoners remark—in books. Hazel insisted on coming back by the via

of Great Britain, in the hope that the cute Prince of Wales would peg her and forget about Buckingham Palace.

"There's a boy that's going to *get* somewhere," says Hazel. "I predict a great future for him if he works hard and tends to his knitting!"

The good-looking H. R. H. Edwards is sitting pretty at that, now isn't he?

Well, we did see the Prince of Wales at the Shawfts-bury Theater, but though by actual count he once glanced in our direction, Mr. Wales was Hazel-proof, in spite of the fact that Hazel is the real McCoy and has been a disturbance amongst the annoying sex since she tossed away her rattle for a powder puff. So having failed to panic royalty and being as homesick as Robinson Crusoe, we checked out of London and started for the Gem of the Ocean.

A bone-chilling, foggy drizzle was falling and by the time we slid into Southampton it was coming down the same way it does at Niagara Falls. Hazel, the demon shopper, became crazily infatuated with a silk and lace shawl in a shop window and insisted on buying it, in spite of my advice to the opposite. Really, we had more trunks as it was than a herd of elephants! They were all full of stuff to delight the customs boys and while me and Hazel have singly and together smiled our way out of many a critical situation, these

hard-boiled customs inspectors can't be bribed with mere eye work. They have too strong a sense of *duty*, if you know what I mean. That's just a near pun, so don't bother with it.

Anyway, Hazel has a bad habit of being as close as a tie game when it comes to circulating her own dimes, even if she has been the reason for lots of other people's gulden changing hands. Haggling over the price of this shawl ate up so much time that when we were about to leave the store and a hoarsely fatigued saleslady, we discovered to our horror that we had just twenty minutes to make our boat!

We dashed madly outside in the downpour of rain and gazed wildly around for a taxi. There was exactly one in sight and we yelled at it just as a similar yell came from across the street. The cab skidded dizzily to a stop and lifting our skirts we braved the elements and such male eyes as were passing, including the taxi chauffeur's. I yanked open the door of the cab, telling the goofy-looking driver to keep his eyes front, and just as me and Hazel are about to step excitedly in an undersized and equally excited youth starts inside through the opposite door.

We hesitate in amazement and then the damp and angry Hazel finds her voice.

"Get back in line, Dizzy," she tells the surprised stranger. "This is *our* cab!"

"That's what *you* think!" sneers the butter-in. "I was on the runnin' board of this boiler before it stopped. Run along, I'm busy. This here taxi's engaged!"

"Try and get it!" snaps Hazel, fit to be tied.

"Try and stop me!" grins this modern Chesterfield.

"If you were a gentleman," says Hazel, curling her cheery lip, "you wouldn't argue with a lady!"

"People which lives in gasoline tanks shouldn't throw matches," comes back our opponent coolly. "If you was a lady you wouldn't butt in where you wasn't invited!"

Meanwhile the taxi driver is a neutral but much interested audience. Covered from head to foot by the British equivalent of a slicker, the rain meant nothing in his young life! He was likewise nobody's fool. With great presence of mind he shoves the meter over to "Waiting Time" so that no matter who wins the argument *he* won't be the loser!

"You're nothing but a little English cur!" says Hazel calmly to the other occupant of the taxi.

He immediately busts out laughing. "Ha, ha!" he chortles. "The funny part is that I ain't *English* at all!"

It was our turn to grin.

"But you admit being a cur?" asks Hazel scornfully.

"I don't admit nothin'!" says the little fellow warily.

"You got to see Silent Sam Shapiro, my manager. He does all my business."

Don't you love that?

Well, while all this trifling small talk is being had, both of us and the pest are taking unwilling shower baths of typical cold Southampton rain.

We're making no progress at all, with Hazel and her tête-à-tête getting along like a couple of headache powders in a glass of water. So *I* took a hand.

"Listen, young man!" I says, smiling sweetly, "we've got about fifteen minutes to catch a boat for America and——"

"Why didn't you *say* you was Amuricans?" interrupts the stranger. "I would of worked different!"

"Did you expect us to wave flags, you little boob?" snorts Hazel. "Hurry up and get away from that door—we're late!"

"Stop squawkin' and leave me alone, will you?" complains our young friend. "So you're Amuricans, hey? Well, well, well! So am I. I come from Noo Yawk. Where did you cuteys blow in from? Ain't this Southampton a fearful slab?"

"Shut up!" almost screams the nervous Hazel, with a hasty glance at her watch. "If you don't go away from this cab I'll——"

"Oh, be yourself, good-lookin' and quit gettin' rosy with me!" says the Noo Yawker peevishly. "I'm

shovin' off for Broadway on the same scow *you're* goin' back on. Flop down there and we'll all take this taxi!"

Once in the cab and out of the flood, introductions came easily. I identified myself and the still seething Hazel, and our companion broke down and confessed to being Mike McGann, an aspirant for the batam-weight boxing championship. When Hazel had digested *that* startling information she sniffed contemptuously and turned on the ice for Michael. The combination of "Mike McGann" and "prize-fighter" murdered her interest and Mike just couldn't sell himself to Hazel.

On the other hand I didn't find the not bad-looking Michael hard to take at all. It's a cold fact that he had the earmarks of a fighter, both of 'em being rather soggy and swollen—but now that the transportation problem had been solved he really seemed to have quite a winning personality. To get my troubled mind off the way our taxi was skidding all over the slippery wet pavements I engaged Mike in conversation. It wasn't a hard trick.

"What were you doing in Europe, Mr. McGann?" I asked, with a show of interest that burnt Hazel up.

"Who—me?" says Mike. "Oh, I just been acin' around. A week ago I win a brawl at the National Sportin' Club. What a swell trap *that* is and how they

put on dog—nothin' but dress suits and dukes! They thought I was a mug but that ain't what they think now! I knock off a boloney by the name of Drummer Tansy with one cuff in the pan. The second time I feint him he become a canvas inspector, goin' down without bein' hit and takin' the count! The big mackerel had fifteen pounds on me, too. Them milk-fed English scrappers is just giggles to me, no kiddin'. All they got is their trunks!"

"You hate yourself, don't you?" sneers the bored Hazel, yawning and looking out the taxi window at the rain.

"No, I don't hate myself, sweetness," says Mike, not a bit ruffled. "But when a guy's good he might as well admit it!"

I gave Michael his laugh and then I remarked that it surprised me to find out that a boy of his small size—he didn't weigh a grain over 118—should be a pugilist. I had the idea that most boxers were built *à la* Dempsey. This appeared to slightly steam Mons. McGann.

"So you think it's funny a little guy should be a box-fighter, hey?" he says indignantly. "Where d'ye get that stuff? The greatest battlers the world has ever saw was little guys and if you don't think so you're crazy! Ain't you ever saw a pitcher of Napoleon?"

"Do you compare yourself with Napoleon?" inquires Hazel, with withering scorn. It was wasted on Mike.

"Why not? The French is as good as we are, ain't they?" he says.

That won and Hazel threw up her hands with a whinney of resignation!

Deliberately turning his back on the outraged Hazel, Michael then began promoting himself with me. After he told me that I was as soothing to the eyes as boric acid and I told him to behave or I'd give him the last lesson first, he explained the weights in the different classes of pugilism. His life-long ambition was to become champion in his own division, the bantam-weight, and according to Mike that ambition would be realized shortly after he arrived in New York. Honest to Brooklyn, he had more confidence in himself than a deep-sea diver ducking his head in a bathtub!

Plenty amused by Miguel's English and quaint philosophy, I looked forward to lots of guffaws on what would otherwise be a brutal boat ride back home, as I'm no sailor. I was not disappointed regarding Mike's entertainment value. Believe me, he certainly gave us service!

About half-way to the dock our taxi suddenly came to a slithering stop, with a screech and burning of emergency brakes. To the accompaniment of some choice cockney oaths from our chauffeur, a muttered



curse from Mike that was at least clean and faint screams from me and Hazel, we're all tumbled together in a heap by the unexpected halt. As the taxi slides on again Hazel sticks her head out the window in the rain and remarks that we almost ran over a cat.

"A *cat*, hey?" says Mike tensely, grabbing Hazel's arm. "What color, kid?"

"It was a black cat," answers Hazel frigidly, removing Michael's hand from her arm the same way she'd pick up an overripe tomato. "And my name is Miss Killian—not *kid*!"

"Your name will be *mud* now!" he tells Hazel. "Can you imagine a black cat crossin' our path? Ain't that a tough break, when we're late and everything? I betcha we miss the boat or crash into somebody or the wheels'll come off this tin can we're in, or else——"

"Or else they won't!" butts in Hazel testily. "Be still, you little crape-hanger. I think there's a touch of undertaker in you!"

"I wouldn't be surprised," answers the future bantam-weight champion. "Layin' 'em out cold and stiff is my business! If you're a good girl I might let you see me fight when we get to Noo Yawk."

"I'm not in the habit of going around with prize-fighters, thank you!" snaps Hazel.

"Well, a round is all I generally let 'em go with me!" says Mike.

"I wish you would stop talking to me—I don't like you!" says Hazel furiously.

"See if I care!" answers Mike with an untroubled grin. "If you don't quit speakin' out of turn I'll street you from my taxi and let this English rain make a bum out of your permanent wave!"

Honestly, the lovely but torrid-tempered Hazel, used to having the boys jump through hoops at her command, was commencing to get red-headed at being unable to do anything with Michael's delivery. I stepped into the breach with a change of conversation, to ward off violence!

"Do you really believe a black cat crossing your path is bad luck, Mr. McGann?" I ask him.

"Absolutely!" says Mike emphatically, now on what I was soon to find out was his favorite subject. "And before this day's over *you'll* be believin' it, too. One or all of us is due for a piece of grief. I never seen that sign fail! Why, listen here, kid, about a year ago I was out in——"

But really, I don't want to detain you too long. While Hazel alternately yawned and giggled and I let out careful inches on a smile, Miguel seriously told us of various cruel and unusual misfortunes that had befallen himself and friends as the direct result of ebony kittens scampering across their right of way. Honestly, he put us both in hysterics when he wound up his

mournful anecdotes by taking a well-worn rabbit's foot from his pocket and rubbing it vigorously to offset Mr. Black Cat's bad luck!

Me and Hazel were beating a continual nervous tattoo on the floor of the taxi with our slippers as the minutes ticked off and traffic jams kept us crawling toward the pier in that horrible rain. And yet they like it over there! I remember when I once bitterly complained of the smoky haze in London, a shop-girl, sick and tired of trying to sell me a hat, told me that the British fog was "far better than the glare of your beastly American sun!"

Still, I suppose it's natural for people to brag about the climate in their home town, no matter what it is. Perhaps even in Hades the natives go around boasting to the new arrivals about the total absence of snow and the beautiful warm climate all the year round!

Well, when we finally arrived at the dock we had much less than ten minutes to get aboard the boat. Mike nearly swooned when in paying the fare he discovered that our chauffeur was cross-eyed. That and the black feline sealed our doom beyond a doubt, he gloomily assured us, and in spite of the scarcity of time he forced us to stand still till he'd repeated "Bread and butter, bread and butter!" ten times to foil the jinx. Mike was a hot sketch, really!

All Michael's baggage was already aboard the ship,

his manager having attended to that. Our trunks were below decks, but our suitcases—"boxes" as they call 'em in the United Kingdom—had been forwarded ahead and were still on the dock. We quickly identified them and Mike shooed us up the gangplank, telling us he'd bring our hand luggage along as there were no porters in sight. At first Hazel strenuously objected, on the grounds that Miguel was trying to put over a fast one. She informed me in a loud aside that Mike was probably a clever crook who had framed our meeting and everything else in order to abduct our suitcases. She said she'd as soon put him in charge of something worth money as she'd put a rabbit in charge of a leaf of cabbage!

However, I managed to chase her protestingly aboard, telling the obliging Mike to do his stuff and make it snappy.

Hazel's flock of hat-boxes caused all the excitement, and really within the next few minutes there was enough of that commodity to satisfy the most exacting! A shopper by birth, Hazel has attended all the sales in the world except the one Columbus took, and in Paris she just ran wild. The perspiring Michael was forced to make two trips with Hazel's baggage and just as he raced across the pier with his second armful of millinery the dear old gangplank was being drawn in. Honestly, from then on it was all slapstick, lacking

nothing but a director, a camera and a couple of union-pie-throwers!

Hurling the hat-boxes aboard, Mike made a praiseworthy but wild leap for the deck, lustily cheered by the delighted mob on the dock and the heavily thrilled me and Hazel. However, he turned out to be a very much better pitcher than he was a broad jumper. The hat-boxes landed K. O. but with Mike it was different! By an odd coincidence he missed the gangplank from here to Baluchistan and hit the water with a fearful splash. Me and Hazel were only two of the scores who shrieked and "Oh-ed!" while the laughing deck-hands fished him out of the water and pulled him aboard, limp, soaked and bedraggled. Try and keep an Irishman down with plain water!

Accompanied by a frantic young gentleman who we afterwards learned was Silent Sam Shapiro, Mike's manager, me and Hazel rushed down to where the water-logged Mr. McGann lay prostrate on the deck. The ship's doctor and some admiring volunteers were busy trying to bring him back to normalcy. Michael looked like a total loss when Silent Sam pushed his way through and scowled down at his unconscious meal ticket.

"The dizzy little stiff!" remarks Silent Sam indignantly to the world at large. "We got sixty thousand dollars' worth of box fights signed up and can you

imagine this bozo takin' a chance like that with *my* cut of the sugar?"

"You unfeeling wretch!" explodes Hazel, to my surprise. "He might have been drowned!"

"He'd just as soon play a dirty trick like that on me as not!" agrees Silent Sam. "When I first took hold of him he was as homeless as a poker chip, yet he ain't got a ounce of gratitude in his system for what I done for him. They don't make 'em no selfisher!"

We both glare at him and at that minute Michael opens his eyes, staring around vacantly. Then he sees me and a glint of recognition brightens his face.

"I told you that black cat and that cross-eyed banana which run that taxi would gum this trip for me!" he gulps almost triumphantly through chattering teeth. "Somebody catch me a cuppa hot coffee, I'm as cold as a pawnbroker's heart!"

Well, on the voyage home Michael McGann and his talkative manager, Silent Sam Shapiro, clung to us like bathing suits, honestly. While Michael was recovering from his spectacular dive into the briny, Silent Sam told us something about him. He was rushing his visible means of support back from unamended Europe to get him "off the gin and on the gym," as he put it. Yes, McGann was his real name and Silent Sam wouldn't let him put "One-Round," "Kid," "Hur-

ricane" or anything like that in front of it. Why? Look at the records of fistiana, says Samuel, and you'll see that few boxers called "Fighting" this or "Knock-out" that ever held a title. The good ones are all plain Jack Dempsey, Harry Greb, Mickey Walker, Benny Leonard, Johnny Dundee, etc.

Sam also related how a couple of years before he had paid one Beansy Mullen five hundred dollars for Mike's contract and thought he got a bargain. The sport writers told him it was the same kind of a bargain as paying five hundred dollars for a doughnut would be. Samuel admitted that he and Mike wore straw hats in the winter-time for a while, but added he could sell Mike now for twenty-five thousand dollars easily.

"Sell him?" I ask, frowning. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself to hold that boy in slavery—to take part of his money when *he* does all the fighting?"

"How d'ye get that way?" says this master mind in amazement. "Managin' a leather-pusher's a tough racket. I got to figure out wise fights for Mike and rate him along, whilst all he's got to do is go in there with a pair of nice silk trunks on and take his pastin'!"

Hazel clucks her tongue and I curled my lip at him.

"Just what did you do during the war, Mr. Shapiro?" I ask him.

"I claimed exemption!" says Samuel promptly. "On

the grounds of double pneumonia. When I come out of the hospital I couldn't make the weight for the trenches. But I give my wife to my country without a whimper! I sent her across as a Red Cross nurse and——"

"You're married?" I interrupted.

"Not right now," says Sam. "My noble wife figured I wouldn't be able to cope with that pneumonia so she hauled off and threw a divorce at me. I heard she wed a Frenchman."

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" I says.

"Why?" asks Sam. "It was the Frog's own fault, wasn't it?"

At that Hazel flung aside all pretense and laughed her head off. Honestly, anyone who can keep Hazel giggling seems to be able to have her friendship for the asking. So Silent Sam, being a gold mine of chuckles, found little difficulty in playing around with Hazel on the voyage back home.

While Silent Sam Shapiro devoted his restless energy to building himself up with the temporarily receptive Hazel, Mr. McGann tried his luck with me. Always for anyone who is trying to get somewhere, I gave Mike a lot of my time. Really, he was a good egg and one thing alone he did for me made him solid. It's a hobby of mine to fall a prey to seasickness, once aboard the lugger. Well, after watching my antics the first



day out Michael instructed me in a before breakfast exercise that to my surprise and gratitude cured me.

Apropos of nothing, the most amusingly interesting thing about Michael McGann to me was his absolute serfdom to superstition. Mike saw a "sign," good or bad—usually bad—in everything that happened during his waking hours and when he slept he found omens in his dreams. Neither me nor you nor nobody else could hope to remember all of Mike's "signs," but I'll put out a few of 'em here so you can get a sparse idea.

According to Michael, it was bad luck for a third person to walk between two others; to be the first man to enter the ring for a bout; to sing before breakfast; to fight or do anything of importance on Friday, the thirteenth; to step into a ring without his old cap and faded bathrobe; to break a mirror; to walk under a ladder; to spill salt; to open an umbrella in a room; to put a hat on a bed; to whistle in the dressing-room before a fight; to return to the starting point before reaching his objective without first counting nine; to dream of snakes; or what have you? Really, Mike's "bad luck signs" came under the head of countless, and during the journey he went out of his way to call my attention to such of 'em as came up. His solemn warnings to Hazel had her continually on edge and kept Silent Sam busy apologizing for his gloomy little employee.

Regarding good luck tip-offs, Mike was a bit uncertain, as he was always looking for the worst of it. Four-leaf clovers, picking up pins, touching hunchbacks on the back, having a mole on the right shoulder and finding horse-shoes just about made up his list of "favorable" occurrences. As for a rabbit's foot, well—ask the man who owns one! Mike's catalog of good luck omens didn't contain many pages, but he was a constant reader of those it did.

"Don't mind that little clown," says Silent Sam one day when Hazel complained about Mike riding her for humming on deck before breakfast. "My athlete's stopped so many wallops around the ears I think it's gave him a slight touch of insanity, what I mean!"

The night before we moored at New York, Mike and Silent Sam oiled the steward for a private table for four and we had a very formal dinner party. Among other things, one question was all cleared up that eventful evening. Hazel had expressed a few doubts as to Michael's ability as a fighter, but she never did *that* thing again!

Our dinner was going along beautiful when the fireworks went off. Me and Hazel wore our most pulse-quickenning décolletés, while the compactly built Mike and the nice looking Sam were very restful to the iris in perfectly fitting tuxedos. Many a glance of honest admiration flashed at our table and don't think it didn't!

In passing me the cream, Hazel happened to accidentally knock over the salt shaker and a lot of it spilled on the table-cloth. The rest of us didn't even notice it, but honestly the superstitious Mike's eyes bulged out a foot! He seemed positively horrified and told Hazel she would surely meet with awful misfortune if she didn't immediately throw some of the salt over her left shoulder. Impressed in spite of herself by Michael's gravity, Hazel obediently shook the salt container vigorously over her dazzling white shoulder and then the fun waxed fast and furious!

That salt hit an amazed diner behind us right in the eye and Silent Sam Shapiro threw back his head and laughed like a hyena. Mike contributed a guilty grin, but honestly me and Hazel were terrified! The red-faced victim rose and approached our table with mayhem in one eye and hot-blooded murder in the other. Equally flushed and plenty upset, Hazel began to stammer an embarrassed apology, but he cut her off quite nastily. Well, my girl friend's temper compares favorably with a wounded wildcat's and hot words flew back and forth like sparrows. When the unwillingly salted passenger intimated that Hazel and a lady were two different things, Michael McGann laid down his napkin and stood before him. The comparison in size was ridiculous, really. Mike wasn't a hair over five foot two and scaled under 120 pounds, but every ounce of

him was fighter! Hazel's *vis-à-vis* was almost a six-footer, but he was likewise middle-aged, puffy-jowled and paunched.

"Listen, you big parsnip!" says Mike, all business and looking it, "that stuff about this girl not bein' no lady is out, get me? I think I'll put *you* out too, just to be nasty!"

*Whack!* One of Michael's iron fists slammed into the big man's highly amazed tummy. *Clunk!* The other fist was buried to the wrist in the same place. This was repeated twice with lightning-like rapidity, and with a grunting gasp Mike's prey bent double at the waist, bringing his chin down just in time to keep an engagement with two terrible blows to that part of his anatomy. He fell with the usual dull thud, as if hit with a sledge! Confusion took complete charge for a few moments, during which our gay little party hurriedly scurried out on deck.

In the shadow and safety of a life-boat, Mike coolly wiped his skinned knuckles with a gaudy silk handkerchief and seemed to take the incident as a matter of course, blaming it on Hazel for spilling the salt in the first place. He knew something would happen, he says, but got no further! Me and Hazel, furious at the undesirable attention we had attracted, fled to our cabin, leaving Mike and Sam flat.

Well, that was the last we saw of Mike McGann and

Silent Sam on the boat. The fifth and sixth horsemen of the Apocalypse weren't even in sight the next morning when we docked at Manhattan, and I naturally thought they'd passed right out of our lives. Far be it from such! I hadn't been back on the job at the St. Moe a week when Michael and Samuel appeared on the scene. I tried to give them the air but that was a case of no can do, so I finally forgave 'em for what they did on the ship and in a couple more weeks they'd won a pardon from Hazel, too.

About that time me and Hazel were faced by a serious problem. We were getting a bit overweight as the result of the high life, the lolling around on chaise lounges and the rich foodstuffs we enjoyed on that wonderful trip abroad. The mere thought of double chins, washladies' busts and scrubladies' hips had us scared silly! We went on a diet, we took various reducing dopes, we walked miles, rowed boats and rode horseback in Central Park, took electric treatments—well, really, all we didn't try was cutting the surplus poundage off with a knife. At the end of three weeks I had picked up four more pounds and Hazel had accumulated seven!

As in the matter of my seasickness, the versatile Mike McGann again came to the rescue. He made us buy regulation gymnasium suits—except that ours were naturally silk—and put us through a course of scien-

tific reducing exercises on the roof of our apartment house daily. Michael knew what it was all about, as he'd frequently had to "make weight" for a fight. In two weeks me and Hazel had both regained our usual sylph-like mid-season forms, and we only stopped our open-air athletics when we discovered the windows of the surrounding apartment-houses filled with enthusiastic male spectators armed with field-glasses!

This platonic friendship between us and the boys continued smoothly, and I was genuinely interested in little Mike's dogged climb to the top in the fistic profession, which he called the "toughest game in the world." He won a couple of bouts in New York and once we went with him to see Frankie White, the bantam-weight champion, defend his title, as Mike was to be Frankie's next opponent. Before the main bout that evening Michael was introduced from the ring to the noisy crowd. There was a gentleman sitting next to us wearing a beautiful fur coat, and with great presence of mind Mike coolly borrowed the gorgeous garment to be introduced in, so that he'd "look like he *meant* somethin'," as he explained to the smiling owner. The hilarious mob was duly appreciative of the fur-coated challenger—especially the gallery!

A month later Mike and Sam left for New Orleans, where Mike was to engage in the battle of his career—a twenty-round quarrel with Frankie White for the

bantam-weight championship of terra firma. As Michael left Manhattan at a convenient hour me an' Hazel went to the station to wish him luck. I gave him a four-leaf clover to wear on his belt in the ring, and he was speechless with pleasure, but the next instant he gravely rejected Hazel's offering of a good luck swastika pin, on the grounds that anything pointed in the line of gifts breaks friendship. He promised to call me on long-distance immediately after the fight and tell me what happened, though the result was already a foregone conclusion to him. Mike modestly said that he'd lay Frankie like linoleum.

However, the day of the bout I didn't wait for Michael's phone call. Me and Hazel had gone crazy and bet five hundred dollars each on him at three to one odds and we were an inch from the grave with anxiety. I got a newspaper on the wire and found that our Mike had knocked out the unfortunate Frankie White in the fifth round and his visiting card now read, "Michael McGann, Bantam-weight Champion of the World."

"I liked that boy from the first minute I saw him!" lies the joyful Hazel as she collected her fifteen hundred dollar winnings.

Well, to my great surprise no message of any nature came from the victorious Michael via New Orleans, and it was a week after he became emperor of all the

bantams and returned to New York before I got word from him. Mike unexpectedly called on me at our flat one evening while Hazel was at the show shop doing her evening chores. Honestly, I was astounded at the change in his appearance and manner as I shook his limp hand. Instead of being pardonably proud of his brand new title, Mike looked peaked and sank into a chair with a gloomy sigh. You can picture my further astonishment when I congratulated him on being a champion, only to see him burst into tears!

"What on earth is the matter?" I asked him anxiously.

"That title ain't worth a dime to me, kid!" he moans.

"Not a thin dime!"

"How come?" I gasped.

"Kid," he says, "this is a tough world! I cop the championship *in my twelfth fight*—ain't that a crime?"

"I don't make you at all!"

"You don't, hey?" groans Michael. "Well, then, listen—my first fight as champ will be my *thirteenth* battle, won't it? How in the name of Lloyd's George can I win *that* one?"

I stared at him for a minute and then sat down beside him, not knowing whether to bust out laughing or to be sorry for this poor little superstition-bound egg. I tried to argue him out of his silly belief that he couldn't possible win bout number thirteen, but I might as



well have tried to argue Bryan into coming out for the saloons! I really did want to help the melancholy Mike, however, so I racked my brain for a solution to his problem, being satisfied it was a *real* problem to a person of Michael's peculiar mental make-up. Finally the old brain-pan cooked up a scheme that I was positive would ward off the jinx.

"Look here, Mike," I says, shaking him out of his dismal trance, "if I help you ruin your hoodoo, will you follow my instructions?"

"I'll folley 'em anyways," says Mike. "I like you!"

I blushed thanks and continued:

"Very well. Pack your boxing gloves and go way out to some hick hamlet where they never saw or heard of you in their lives. Throw away your real name and use another one while you're there. Then take on some amateur for a bout—Silent Sam can arrange that part of it. You'll win that fight easily, but as it won't be for your championship and will never show in the records—in short, not an official bout—it won't count if you *should* lose, get me? On the other hand, if you *win*, why, that will take the place of your thirteenth fight and your first *real* battle to defend your title will be your *fourteenth*! What do you say about that?"

Michael, who hadn't missed a syllable, devoted a full minute to the sport of thinking. Then he rose and shook my hand, a smile on his face.

"I'll proposition Sam on the thing," he tells me. "I suppose I'm crazy to do this, as the guy says before twistin' the lion's tail, but—I'm goin' to do just like you said and see what happens!"

It took Michael just an hour to sell Sam, who escorted his mournful champion out to the sovereign state of Washington a few days later as "Knockout Sweeney."

Three weeks passed in review before Mike and Sam returned to Broadway and if you missed seeing Michael you never saw a wreck in your life, not even if you were aboard the *Hesperus*! Honestly, our little pal's face looked as if he'd deliberately held it against a particularly vicious buzz-saw over the week-end. Silent Sam told me the story while the battered Mike stood disconsolately by. Following my well meant advice, Sam had matched Mike with some unknown preliminary boy whose name they didn't even remember correctly. Nobody knew who Mike was, which was the only part of my scheme that was a success. Their intended victim turned out to be a surprise of the first water, giving Michael a terrible beating and all but knocking him out!

"This little tramp wouldn't untrack himself!" snarls Samuel. "He wouldn't fight—just went in there and dogged it. He didn't hit that tomato twice in the entire——"

“How could I take that lucky stiff?” butts in Mike with his first show of interest. “How could I bounce him *when he’s got a mole on his right shoulder. Nobody* can beat no guy with a mole on his right shoulder!”

That incident sort of disgusted me with Mike McGann and I firmly refused to see or talk to him any more. I guess it was two or three months before I heard of him again and then one day, idly glancing through the sporting page at the switchboard, I read where Mike was to defend his championship against one Half-Round O’Cohen at Madison Square Garden. Shortly afterwards Michael and Samuel arrived in person. In some unknown manner Silent Sam had coaxed Hazel into going to dinner with him between shows, had worked fast and won her over again for the time being. She helped him plead for Michael with me and—well, I made it a party of four. Mike kept his personality in high that evening and before we separated he’d managed to foist ringside tickets to his coming bout with Half-Round O’Cohen on me and Hazel.

On the afternoon of the big fight Michael bounded into me in an almost hysterical condition. He blurted out that he wasn’t going through with the match as he’d just discovered he hadn’t one chance in a million to win!

“We weigh in at two o’clock for the boxin’ commis-

sion," wails Michael, wringing his valuable hands, "and when this Half-Round O'Cohen comes out to hop on the scales I like to drop dead! Who d'ye think he is?" I shook my shapely head. "He's the gil with the lucky mole on his right shoulder which made me like it out in Washington!"

*Oo-la-la!*

With a kind of gloomy humor Mike added that when Mr. O'Cohen in turn recognized him as the "Knock-out Sweeney" he had thoroughly whipped months before, O'Cohen foamed at the mouth and uttered strange cries. No wonder. He'd been champion of the world for nearly six months and didn't know it!

Going further into the subject, Mike went on to tell me of a regular shower of bad luck omens that had hit him that fatal day. He'd broken a mirror, accidentally walked under a ladder, lost his rabbit's foot and also the lucky bathrobe he'd worn into the ring since he first began smacking people for pennies. In despair, he scurried to a fortune teller and the best she could do was to warn him to beware of a dark man.

"Well, don't speak to any dark men today, then," I says.

"It ain't a question of *speakin'* to em. I got to *fight* one of 'em!" groans Mike. "This O'Cohen's a Mexican and he's so dark he looks like Góimany's future!"

Four hours of combined pleading and threats by me,

Hazel and Silent Sam were required to get Michael to start for the abattoir. The seats he's presented to me and Hazel were right up against the ropes and directly in his corner and we nervously smiled our moral support to a little fellow who certainly needed it if ever anyone did.

Michael used the privilege of a champion to cause a long delay which put the impatient attendance on edge, but he absolutely refused to enter the ring before Half-Round O'Cohen did—not if the customers cried their eyes out!

“The first man in the ring is always the last man to leave it!” says Mike stubbornly.

The wild-eyed promoter rushed to the boxing commission seated at the ringside and talked a bit. Under threat of being barred from working at his trade in New York State if he didn't behave, Michael entered the ring. He looked every inch a beaten man as he wearily flopped down on the little stool in his corner.

“Good luck, Mike—we hope you win!” I called up to him excitedly.

“I ain't got a Chinaman's chance!” whispers Michael, pushing away a busy handler and leaning over the ropes to us. “I just counted exactly *thirteen* sport writers sittin' around the ring!”

O'Cohen's seconds came over to examine the bandages on Michael's hands. One of em is humming,

“Oh, one thing I know and you can believe it, the first in the ring is the last to leave it!”

Mike moaned aloud and Silent Sam chased the grinning singer over to the other corner.

Introduction—challenges—wild and deafening applause—jeers—the bell!

Oh, that horrible first round! Hazel covered her face with her hands, but honestly the raw brutality of it fascinated me! Apparently hypnotized by the “lucky” mole on his opponent’s right shoulder and the knowledge that this fellow had defeated him before, Michael took a terrible punching. Even a pantingly muttered “Bread and butter, bread and butter!” couldn’t save him, though it highly amused the cruelly grinning O’Cohen. The mob, always with a winner in boxing as in anything else, stood on their chairs and howled for O’Cohen to “knock him for a loop!” He certainly tried, but Michael was game—beneath the bludgeonings of O’Cohen his head was bloody but unbowed! Occasionally Mike lashed out desperately with both gloves, but there was little heart in the efforts, both the delighted O’Cohen and the enraged crowd being quick to sense it. The dark-skinned challenger drove the tottering champion all around the ring, beating him from pillar to post till finally the tired Michael fell into a clinch in his own corner, right above me and Hazel.

"C'mon, you yellah false alarm, *like* it!" sneered O'Cohen, pounding Mike's reddened body with horrible blows.

"Oh, oh—why don't they stop it?" weeps Hazel.

The gong ending that fearful first round found Mike on the floor, the referee counting over him and the place in an uproar. Mike's seconds ran out and dragged him to his corner, where they worked over him furiously. Ammonia was held under his nose, he was sponged and fanned, caustic was applied to his innumerable cuts, a half orange was thrust into his gaping mouth. Silent Sam, a wreck himself, leaned down over the ropes and looked at me, sorrowfully shaking his head.

"If this kid's old man could see him takin' this pastin' without even punchin' back, he'd turn over in his grave!" he says.

"Was his father a fighter too?" I asked, for want of something to say.

"No," says Sam, "the old gent was a blacksmith."

"*A blacksmith!*" I repeated thoughtfully.

A wild idea struck me and I immediately went into action! Jumping up, I leaned over and pinched Mike's sagging arm, which dangled through the ropes. He looked down at me hopelessly.

"You little quitter!" I hissed. "You believe in signs, eh? Well, you're letting this fellow beat you just be-

cause of that mole on his shoulder—which *I* think is nothing but a wart myself—and you come from the luckiest family in the world!”

“What d’ye mean, lucky?” says Mike listlessly.

“What was your father?” I ask him.

“A blacksmith,” says Mike.

“Fine!” I says. “Now what does a blacksmith—what did your father work with all day long?”

Mike frowns thoughtfully for an instant. Then his battered little face brightens in one big smile.

“I got you, kid!” he yells joyfully.

To the consternation of Silent Sam, Mike laughs loud and wildly. His shoulders straighten and with firmly set jaw he glares across the ring at the jubilant O’Cohen, who saw the world’s championship within his grasp. The bell clanged suddenly for the second round, and honestly Mike shot from his stool like a bullet from an automatic! He was in the startled O’Cohen’s corner before that gentleman had taken a step forward. *Bang! Biff! Slam! Sock!* Before a now maniacal crowd, Half-Round O’Cohen crashed to the canvas, face down, from four perfectly timed and perfectly murderous punches! The referee counted up to seven, took another searching look at the body and then held up Mike’s glove to the hysterical mob. So *that* was all settled!

Michael shoved away his lunatical admirers who



swarmed into the ring about him and leaned down to me with a bloody, happy grin.

“Kid—you’re the eagle’s ice skates!” he gasps. “If you hadn’t put me hep I’d never of remembered that my old man handled nothin’ all his life but—*horse-shoes!*”

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SQUARE SEX

IN the fiscal year of 68 B.C. (before Coolidge), a young gentleman who rejoiced in the high-sounding name of Cornificus stepped out of a projection room in sunny Italy after previewing a super-production by the local deMille and remarked:

“A picture is a poem without words!”

Well really, if the movies are poetry I certainly wish the composers would try a little harder to make more of 'em rhyme. While I admit I've witnessed some films that smacked of Shakespearian verse, I've likewise watched plenty that reminded me strangely of Old Mother Goose! Having just had a long look at the manufacture of a motion picture, I'm satisfied that if the scenario poets would stare about them in the studios these master minds would find climaxes, thrills and gasp-producing situations right under their comely noses to the extent of galore. Honestly, the actual

making of a movie is as full of red-blooded romance, human interest, excitement, comedy, drama and the unexpected as the letters of the defendant in a breach of promise suit!

How do *I* know? I helped make one—a picture, not a defendant!

This escapade came to pass, as they say in Patagonia, right after me and Hazel returned from abroad. After we got back again to the Land of the Spree and the Home of the Rave, we both settled down to the old routine. Hazel was kept busy doing her chores at the show shop with ample matinées and the regular evening exhibitions, while I tried not to die of yawning from the constant and monotonous "Number please?" For a change, romance was temporarily conspicuous by its absence as far as we were concerned. That unfortunate experience in Paris with William the wicked waiter, had made Hazel a man-hater for the time being and she was scrupulously steering clear of any petting parties with the exacting sex.

But I still continued to exchange wise cracks with the boys who hungrily hover around the switchboard. I also went on taking boxed and verbal confectionery, occasionally making dinner engagements with the cream of the entries and rejecting moonlight auto ride propositions from the others. If I didn't clown a little I'd go cuckoo. All work and no play makes Jack a

dull boy, but what it makes Jacqueline is fearful, honestly!

I've always got a decided thrill out of entering the lists daily in this eternal tournament of sex, playing the game according to Hoyle and emerging with my reputation and sense of humor still intact. Really, that's a feat just difficult enough to fascinate me and I've done it since the first time I realized that it wasn't merely something stuck in their throats that made the boys catch their breath when they gazed at me!

"My future's all behind me!" says Jerry Murphy, mournfully to me one day. "I don't seem to be gettin' nowheres, what I mean! I only wish I had went to work and got married when I was a handsome young lad and the girls all maniacal over me. Why, they was at least eight wealthy and beautiful young heirlooms chasin' after me day and night, but——"

"*Heirlooms?*" butts in Pete Kift, "Ha, ha, ha—that's one for the book! You mean *heiresses*, you big banana!"

"I'll call 'em what I like!" says Jerry indignantly. "Whose Janes *was* these? Anyways, as I was sayin', should I of got wed I'd of had a big family now and somethin' to live for, get me? I wish I had about a dozen kids and——"

"Tomato sauce!" interrupts Pete, "On the sugar

*you* make you couldn't keep a promise, let alone a dozen kids!"

"But they would be nothin' to prevent them dozen kids from keepin' *me*, would they?" says Jerry.

Don't you love that?

"Chase this act back to its dressing room and get me Vanderbilt four-six-five-nine-six, will you, Cutey?" says Mr. Lee, the booking agent, who's been waiting for service. He grins at the scowling Jerry and Pete. "You boys better go right into your dance. Your cross-fire's all wet!" he tells 'em.

Well speaking of mushrooms, I came down to business bright and early one morning—that is, the morning was bright and I was early—to find the St. Moe just a-quiver with excitement. Under the continual commands of Pete Kift, the merry bellhops are running themselves ragged bringing mail, telegrams, stationery, ice-water and what-not to the most magnificent suite on the most magnificent floor of the most magnificent hotel in Gotham. Yvonne McCann, the night operator that I relieved, greeted me with cheers, as the buzzers on the switchboard were simply running wild with calls to 302-4-6-8, occupied by Mr. Gordon Daft, Esq., and retinue.

As you probably know, Gordon Daft is the most famous superdirector of superpictures in the wide, wide world. He's the fourth musketeer, no fooling! I guess

you've fought your way in to see some of his latest box-office wows: "Are You My Parents?" "Wronged by Mistake," "The Girl Who Loved Plenty," "Murdered in Fun," etc.—all masterpieces which cause the audience to stand up in cheers, the exhibitors to count up in tears and the censors to pick up their shears. You always see Mr. Daft's productions prominently mentioned in the lowdown from the exhibitors in the trade magazines under the heading, "What the Picture Did to Me." Thus:

*"The Girl From Gehenna," directed by Gordon Daft. Book this one, boys, it's the trout's necktie! Personally I thought it an awful thing but the audience ate it up. Ran it three nights with colored revival as opposition and packed 'em in like they do in the subway. Give us more of these and I'll be able to retire. That's what I'll have to do anyways, if they don't lower the rentals. Smiling Billy Goof, Dreamland Theater, Nightmare, Ala.*

Well, anyhow, the noted Mr. Daft had just returned from Hades or some place where he went on location to "shoot" realistic tropical scenes, in his newest example of what can be done with a camera, a good title and an unlimited expense account. Reporters of all sexes besieged him for interviews on "What's Wrong with the Movies?" even carrying the thing to the astonishing extreme of printing his answers. Really, our ambitious phone operators, chambermaids and scrub-

ladies vied with the equally ambitious female guests of the hostelry in trying to catch and hold the eye of this star-making wizard of the screen. His horde of secretaries, servants and stenographers spoke of him in hushed voices as "The Master!"

Oh, Gordon Daft created quite a panic with the neighbors and don't think he didn't!

Nevertheless, all this hullabaloo over Mr. Daft left *me* quite unmoved, and when it came to giving him worship, well, I wasn't putting anything out!

In spite of all this furore he was no good to me, even though he unquestionably produced a mean movie. In my estimation Gordon Daft was just a good egg, rating no particular favors—a nice young fellow and that's all!

A couple or three days after Mr. Daft had stood the St. Moe on its head by his mere august presence, he came to the switchboard in person one morning and just ruined the peace of mind of the girls. After posing there awhile to give these adoring ones a treat, he turned and gazed squarely into my face. I guess my eyes must have been a bit cynical at that moment because I was thinking scornfully what my charming colleagues would do for a smile from Gordon Daft—and what I *wouldn't!*

One instant of puzzled frown and then Mr. Daft had me pegged.

"As I live!" he exclaims with a pleased smile. "The beautiful Goddess of the Switchboard in her native lair! I've been trying to find you everywhere since we made that boxer Leary a champion in London. Fate must have directed my footsteps this morning! How are you?"

"Perfect!" I smiled back, shaking his eager hand. "How's the magic lantern business?"

The other girls, following our tête-à-tête with ears as open as Lake Erie and giving out flocks of wrong numbers as a result, gasped with the shock of hearing the great Gordon Daft spoken to in this frivolous manner. But that swiftly changed to envy when he didn't seem the least bit steamed and continued to make a large fuss over me. However, I was merely wondering how long it would be before he tried to get me to give him Hazel's phone number. I figured I had read his approach correctly, but it seemed I was wrong!

"I never expected to see you at a switchboard again after your exhibition of ingenuity in London," he says, "I've told the story of how you crowned King Leary a score of times!"

"I've told it a few times myself," I says. "What's the name of the twenty-reel insult to the adult intelligence you're assembling now?"

Gasp number two came from the other girls and Mr. Daft grins.



"I'm wild about frankness," he says, "and you're Miss Candid herself! I'd like you to see my latest picture, it's really a good one—plot a bit different, excellent cast and—say, why not dine with me tonight and I'll tell you all about it?"

At this the girls nearly swooned! Honestly, under the circumstances it was hard to resist the temptation to accept that invitation, in a loud voice. But thinking of Hazel, I stalled.

"I think you're giving me a run around," I says, busily manipulating the switchboard plugs. "Why should you have to ask *me* to eat with you? You don't mean to tell me you're friendless in this town, do you?"

Again he laughs.

"Having already devoured your beauty with my eyes," he says, bowing cutely, "I'd like your company for dessert."

"I love that," I says. "You sound like the titles from some of your own movies. Desserts are not good for you—you may find me too rich."

"Perhaps," he says. "At any rate I can *make* you rich! Eventually, why not now?"

"Behave!" I warn him. "Do you wish a number?"

"Why high-hat *me*?" he complains. "I'm harmless and I may be able to do you a lot of good. I've half a

mind to offer you a part in one of my pictures—laugh that off!”

This time two of the girls with weak hearts got up and left the board!

“Oh, daddy, you’re so good to me!” I laughed, in Hazel’s best manner. “I won’t dine with you, but I’ll tell you what I will do—in the interests of better-phone service for the other guests, who are already squawking, you’ve got to go away from here! Run along and I’ll let you call on me next Sunday afternoon. Bring your own cake!”

“Fine!” says Mr. Daft. “That’s a good thought and I look forward to spending a most delightful Sunday!”

“That’s entirely up to you,” I says. “Goo’-by, see you all of a sudden!”

I knew Hazel was going to be home on Sunday and I knew *I* was going to be out! Hazel’s my chum and even though Mr. Daft hadn’t mentioned her name once, she saw him first and I wanted her to have every chance. It’s a hobby of mine to play the game. We girls can be the *square* sex as well as the fair and only a poor and consistent loser of the male sex will sneer at that statement.

When I told Hazel that evening about meeting Mr. Daft she immediately got so excited as the word itself. Really, she hurled questions at me for an hour, but I

managed to come through her eager cross-examination on what the world's champion director had to say about her without disclosing the fact that he said absolutely nothing whatsoever. That was no mean feat! As Hazel's show was about to close it looked like a hard winter and when I mentioned that Mr. Daft was calling on Sunday, Hazel prepared for a killing. I carelessly remarked that I had another engagement for the Sabbath and she certainly didn't do any crying and carrying on for me to remain at home.

Well, I had taken up horseback riding as a pleasant exercise to keep my figure the way they're wearing 'em now and I started to spend Sunday afternoon cantering in Central Park. I demanded a good, speedy equine at the riding academy and I got service, I did for a fact. Honestly, I think they gave me Zev and if they didn't then I'm satisfied I was aboard Zev's master. By a strange coincidence, at Sixty-third Street this animal mistook a traffic cop for a starter and went out after the mile record without even consulting me. From then on it was a typical case of hold everything. I've heard of running fools, but this horse was Mr. Run himself! At Seventy-fourth Street I was four lengths ahead of an excited and leg-weary field composed of mounted police, other riders, automobiles and motorcycle cops. They were all trying, but they couldn't cope with my fiery steed! Around Eighty-sixth Street

I drew my first breath and managed to talk my noble charger out of the crazy idea that he had Paul Revere in the saddle and I pulled him to a walk without assistance. That spoiled the whole day for the panting heroes galloping up behind me, among which, to my great surprise, was Mr. Gordon Daft!

"You ride superbly!" he lies like a gentleman. "Is there anything you *can't* do?"

"Plenty!" I smiled. "I seem to have some trouble avoiding you, for one thing!"

"But why *should* you avoid me?" he wants to know. "Why are you as cold as an Eskimo's nose to me? I'm going to give you a screen test and if you can troupe as well as you can ride, I'll never let you get away from me!"

"Oh, you're *so* masterful!" I says with mock admiration. "I thought you were scheduled to appear at my flat today?"

"I was there," he says. "Where were you? What's the big idea of giving me a pushing around like that?"

"But you saw Hazel, didn't you?" I asked, ducking his questions.

"Saw who? Oh, your girl friend? Yes, I saw her. I think she was with you in London, wasn't she?" says Mr. Daft. "Her features are faintly familiar, but then I'm not much on remembering faces. I gave her a message for you and left right away. You owe

me an apology for breaking your engagement, young lady!"

But really, I was so flustered and astonished at his dismissing Hazel with a mere wave of the hand, you might say, that I couldn't think of a thing to tell him. We rode along in silence for a while, with Mr. Daft closely studying my averted face. Suddenly he burst out:

"Listen, little girl, you have me cataloged all wrong. Get the idea out of your pretty head that I have any unholy designs on you—that's out! You certainly must be aware of the fact that I'll never expire of not knowing beautiful women. It isn't just me—any man in my position has 'em thrown at him hourly! Well, six-fifths of them are meaningless. You're not, which explains my interest!"

"Oh, thank you, sir, she cried!" I says demurely.

"You'll thank me yet and mean it!" says Mr. Daft. "I'm not interested in your figure—though it's a pulse-quickener—I'm interested in your *future*, get me? I'm not trying to promote you, I'm trying to put you where you'll get important money, lots of fame and lots of laughs!"

"Yes, yes, go on!" I says.

"I wish you'd stop clowning and get serious for a minute!" says Mr. Daft pettishly. "I tell you it's the crime of the century for a girl with your unusual good

looks and remarkable wit to waste yourself on a telephone switchboard! Who will you ever meet there? Who, that amounts to anything, will give you a tumble?"

"The best people in New York say hello to me daily," I reminded him.

"Yes—over the phone," says Mr. Daft. "And they also say good-by to you daily, don't forget that! Well, if you should change your mind within the next few days let me know and I'll cast you in my picture. I won't be happy till I get you off that switchboard and started for fame and fortune!"

Honestly, that made the 964th time that similarly "disinterested" gentlemen had made that last remark to me. My answer never varies and seldom runs into more than two words—apple sauce! I'll say this for Mr. Daft—he really seemed very sincere and at no time during our acquaintance did he strike me as a mere John. I won't attempt to tell you that I didn't feel highly flattered by his interest, but——

Well, to lower a high story, Mr. Daft continued to favor me with his kind attentions, a fact that I didn't think it was necessary to encumber Hazel's mind with, though why my beautiful girl friend couldn't hold him was a problem for bigger brains than mine. It's always seemed to me that Hazel has everything in the world to attract a man of the first water, but when it comes to

the high-class boys she always fails to click. She goals 'em all at first glance, but after that it seems to be a case of no can do.

I didn't try to make a heavy boy friend of Mr. Daft; in fact I went out of my way to sell him Hazel. My roommate's show had now closed, and, being a good girl at heart, Hazel simply had to get a job or go without her cakes. The European junket had played havoc with her bankroll and my weekly honorarium wouldn't feed two dyspeptic gnats, let alone two healthy girls. In other words, the panic was on!

About this time Mr. Daft got permission from the management of the St. Moe to use the gorgeous hotel lobby for a scene in "Why Marry Your Husband?" his latest celluloid concoction. He talked me into appearing in the thing at my switchboard as a phone operator and he also commandeered Jerry Murphy and Pete Kift in their respective capacities of house detective and bell captain. The enthusiastic guests who crowded the side-lines, braving the weird glare of the Klieg lights, laughed themselves hysterical watching Jerry and Pete try to make the Barrymores look like supers, both of 'em breaking out with an acting rash and taking it as seriously as if it was diphtheria. Really, when these boys entered the hotel game the comic strip artists lost a couple of wonderful models!

All your little girl friend had to do was to keep

plugging my board and talk to Harold Lorraine, the handsome star, in a couple of closeups. One was supposed to be a very dramatic scene and Mr. Daft carefully rehearsed me. He said Harold would rush up fearfully excited and say to me: "Call police headquarters at once. There's been a murder committed on the third floor!" I was then to exclaim "My God!" open my mouth and eyes wide and frantically try to get police headquarters. It was necessary to say something like that, said Mr. Daft, to get the proper expression of horror and excitement on the features. Well, Harold rushed up and said, "My, what beautiful eyes you have, girlie!" and I said, "Be yourself!" I suppose the lip readers will write complaining letters to the fan magazines when they see *that* scene.

Afterwards Mr. Daft took me and Hazel over to the big studio on Long Island and let us see the "rushes" of the hotel scene run off in the projection room. Honestly, he got quite enthusiastic over my "acting," which was just my natural self, and all the yes-men in the projection room told me I was a knockout, following "the Master's" lead. None of this made much of a hit with the brooding Hazel, and really I was glad when Mr. Daft detailed a willing young assistant director to show us all around the lot.

This sightseeing trip was quite interesting and replete with smiles, for me at least. I always get a kick



out of a movie studio—much more than I do out of most of the product thereof. I thoroughly enjoy the stars who absolutely cannot do their stuff without soft music playing on the set; the puttee-wearing directors who refuse to look at their daily rushes without ditto music in the projection room; the yesmen who hang about the executives and hold their jobs by simply being constantly affirmative; the upstage female stars who come to work with maids, chauffeurs, secretaries, lap dogs and what-not; the dare-devil, underpaid doubles who do the wild rides and wilder airplane jumps for the milk-fed leads; the “gag men” who furnish all the sure-fire hokum; the director who hurls away the scenario with the contemptuous remark, “What does an *author* know about a good story?” and adds that his best pictures have been made without any story at all; the actors who act both before and away from the camera; the hungry-looking extras hoping they are “the type”; the trained cats, hounds, horses, lions, monkeys, etc., that work oftener and harder and get and deserve more money than most of the actors; the hard-boiled camera men and electricians who think everything is all wrong; the producer, late of the cloak and suit industry, who is positive Scott’s “The Lady of the Lake” was written for Annette Kellermann; the sleepless property man who incessantly tells the joke about the undertaker who used to be a director refusing to bury his first

corpse because it "wasn't the type!" etc., etc. and even etc!

Their thrilling plunge into the silent drama had disgusted Jerry Murphy and Pete Kift with hotel life. They were now a couple of artistes and all through with the St. Moe, so they thereupon got rosy with the manager and he promptly checked them out. By stating their pitiful case to Mr. Daft I managed to get them jobs as extras until he had finished with "Why Marry Your Husband?" at least. Knowing nothing of my intercession for them, they blew into the St. Moe one afternoon arm in arm and putting on dog like a sales person with her first engagement ring.

I pretended not to know what they were doing for an existence and they loftily informed me they were in pictures now, as Mr. Daft had quickly recognized their genius after seeing them in the hotel scene in his movie and had engaged them at exorbitant wages on the spot before Mr. D. Griffith could snatch them up. Really, this was a scream to me, especially as neither of 'em knew any more about the movies than they did about the Koran and were as out of place in a picture as a yacht on the desert. I'm positive they thought Alice Lake was a swimming pool!

"We're certainly sorry to see you still tied to the old switchboard and us on the top of the ladder, kid," says Jerry, looking around the lobby with a self-satisfied

grin. "We had lots of laughs together in this drum! We'll undoubtedly be starred soon and we hope you come and see us."

"Don't be makin' the poor girl feel no worse than she does!" rebukes Pete Kift. "It ain't her fault that she ain't a actor, is it? You got to be born a actor, what I mean!"

"No fooling," I says. "Like you and Jerry were?"

"Sure!" says Pete. "My old man used to tend the stage door at Miner's old barleycue house on the Bowery. It's in the blood!"

Don't you love that?

Well, I kept on boosting Hazel to Mr. Daft till one day he cut me off short in the middle of a particularly glowing and first hand description of my girl friend's good points.

"Listen, Gladys!" he says earnestly. "I don't want to hire Hazel—she's a nice girl, but I've got no place for her. What I want to do is engage *you* and I predict a brilliant career for you! Why don't you let me \_\_\_\_\_"

"Mr. Daft," I interrupted, "I know you must think I'm a trifle demented for passing up this lifetime opportunity you're offering me, but honestly, I can't help it! Pictures are no new experience for me—I did time in Hollywood before coming to Manhattan from Bountiful, Utah."

"Bountiful?" says Mr. Daft. "I never heard of it."

"It's fifty-fifty," I says. "It never heard of you, either! However, while I have lots of dreams in the daytime, moving pictures don't figure in them at all—I mean I never have nightmares, just dreams! The studio game thrills me about the same way it thrills a correspondence school office boy to see a postage stamp. I thank you just the same. And now, just what is the matter with Hazel? Isn't she beautiful, hasn't she got——"

"Oh, she's beautiful enough!" says Mr. Daft impatiently. "She's a snappy number and I just know she wears 'em, but she can't troupe! Her brains seem to be out on location too often, get me? In other words, while your girl friend makes a nice display in a bathing suit or an evening gown, she hasn't showed me a thing to make her stand out from a thousand similar beauteous dumbbells that I can have for the asking. You and her don't belong in the same room—she just hasn't got your stuff and that's all there is to it! To please you I'll give her a note to a comedy director who might use her in place of a title as a bathing beauty or——"

"Never mind that note," I butt in. "I wouldn't expose you to writer's cramp for the world! Besides, it wouldn't mean anything, really. Hazel would only

bawl me out for trying to place her in the one-piece suit drama. She's long since tired of being a mere eye-feast and she wants to act or nothing!"

"I can heartily recommend nothing, then!" says Mr. Daft.

Finally the filming of "Why Marry Your Husband?" was almost completed and only the big scene—the hair-raising climax—remained to be shot. Mr. Daft said the title of the picture turned his stomach, as it was simply aimed at the box-office and had as much to do with the story as he had to do with the Japanese earthquake.

So he offered a prize of one thousand dollars for a better label and the contest was open to anyone on the lot outside of the watchmen, who were automatically barred, as the competition was for amateurs only and not for the people who have been composing all the motion picture titles right along. Well, really, I have a decided money complex and I made up my mind I would win that thousand or die in the attempt.

I won it and didn't even get ill, let alone perish!

The climax of this picture called for a thrilling rescue of the leading woman, Thelma Tasty, from a burning yacht in mid-ocean by Harold Lorraine, the star. But child Harold had other plans! The dashing screen hero calmly and pointblankly refused to risk his precious life in the interests of bigger and better movies

and he insisted upon a double doing the large rescue. This eleventh hour mutiny on the part of his star got Mr. Daft red-headed and he ruled the double off on the grounds that Harold had used doubles so many times of late that the dear old public was beginning to get wise that their idol had feet of ice. The argument kept up for a week, with the star and director deadlocked. Honestly, Mr. Daft was frantic as the immense overhead of the company reporting daily went on and the release date drew nearer. Then he remembered how I had maneuvered Fighting Paddy Leary into a world's championship in London and in desperation "the Master" came to me.

"Show me an out to this jam, Miss Fix-It, and you can write your own ticket!" wails Mr. Daft.

Well, gentle reader, I did both!

In a hasty conference behind locked doors with Mr. Daft, his various assistants, production manager and publicity director, I outlined a rather daring and original plan to make the faint-hearted Harold Lorraine rescue Thelma Tasty from the flames. There was a tense silence when I finished speaking—really, you could have heard a gag drop! Mr. Daft frowned, coughed, drummed on the table with a pencil, looked doubtful and finally remarked that he thought my scheme clever, but a bit too risky. That being the cue for the others, they thought so too. All except "Scoop"

Murphy, press-agent and two-thirds of the studio brains. He leaped up and loudly declared my little scheme was fourteen degrees above perfect and there was no way it could miss! Then Scoop made quite a speech, casting admiring glances at me and pointing out the enormous publicity value of my stunt—if it worked. At last the skeptical Mr. Daft was sold and gave his consent to a trial, adding that if one word of my plan leaked out in advance or afterwards there would be no use of anybody present ever showing up on the lot again, even as sightseers.

Several days after this me and Hazel are visiting the studio during a "re-take" of a scene in "Why Marry Your Husband?" The leading woman, Thelma Tasty, is framed in the topmost window of a high wooden tower blowing kisses to her lover, Harold Lorraine. The cameras were clicking away merrily, the usual gang of unnecessary hangers-on were giving matters their undivided attention and the action was progressing smoothly under Mr. Daft's megaphoned orders.

The scene with the principals finished, the extras were moving about the big stage herded by a perspiring assistant director when suddenly I let out a wild shriek at the top of my voice. Mr. Daft swung around on me with an angry exclamation, Hazel jumped away in alarm and I was the embarrassed object of all eyes.

In answer to the questions flung at me I simply pointed heavenwards in speechless horror.

High up in the wooden tower puffs of dense smoke were swirling around the beautiful form of Thelma Tasty and the vicious crackle of flame came clearly from below her. Instantly the studio was in the wildest confusion—here was an unscheduled thrill! Camera men, extras, carpenters, electricians, actors and visitors began milling back and forth in terrified excitement and the great Gordon Daft himself turned pale and also ran madly around calling for the fire department. Trapped high above the ground, with the flames below her already curling upwards, Thelma Tasty screamed piteously for help, but the panic-stricken mob below had all lost their heads and simply fell over each other like stampeded cattle, honestly! Harold Lorraine stood stock-still staring up at his leading woman's plight, apparently petrified with amazement, while a hastily formed and woefully ineffective bucket brigade dashed past him. A pail of water, jostled from somebody's grasp, half drenched Harold and he found his voice.

“For heaven's sake!” he yells wildly, “Somebody climb up there and get her out! What's the matter with all you people? Get ladders, get—oh, hurry! She'll burn to death while you fools stand there looking at her!”



I'm right beside the excited young man, wringing my hands.

"Oh, oh, oh!" I moan in his ear. "This is terrible! Oh, if I was a *man* I'd——"

But with a muttered oath Harold Lorraine pushes past me, dives through the gaping mob and runs for the burning tower. Another minute and our handsome star is frantically climbing its side. And Hazel had contemptuously called Harold a cake eater!

"*Camera!*" bawls Mr. Daft, snapping into himself on the instant that Harold's feet left the ground on their upward climb. "You people keep milling around there—shout, scream, holler, bump into each other—keep busy with those fire buckets—run for water—get ladders—that's it, gimme a riot! Remember your places, you extras, and don't all crowd on one side—if this screens like a movie I'll murder the lot of you!"

Well, after a series of breath-taking slips Harold reached the top of the tower, seized his swooning leading woman in his manly arms and carried her down to safety—*just as I had assured Mr. Daft he would do if my stunt was properly staged!* Honestly, as a "punch climax" it turned out to be far punchier than the one in the original scenario, calling for a rescue from a yacht. The cameras caught it all from a dozen different angles and really it photographed beautifully,

with Mr. Harold Lorraine still in ignorance of that "unprogramed" fire *being carefully plotted and unceasingly rehearsed for weeks*—while he was away from the lot! Harold thought he was a bona fide hero—and as a matter of fact he was!

Scoop Murphy, who, of course, had called out the fire department, plastered pictures and stories about Harold Lorraine, Thelma Tasty, Gordon Daft, the fire and the coming movie all over the front pages of the newspapers for one entire day. As they were New York newspapers, that was as good as having the incident run serially somewhere else. As for Mr. Daft, well, when he finally ceased congratulating me and thanking me for helping him out of the hole he was in with his temperamental star, he told me I could have anything I wanted.

"I don't care *what* it is—ask and it's yours!" he wound up, banging his fist on the top of the table in his office.

"Then I ask a contract—and a fair chance—for Hazel Killian!" I says promptly, while he gasps and stares at me in amazement. "I know *you* can make Hazel an actress—you can make anybody an actress! I've seen some of the dumbbells you've made famous on the screen, Mr. Daft—why can't you do the same thing for Hazel?"

"Why not for *you*?" demands Mr. Daft. "You're

no dumbbell, Gladys, you're that rare animal, a born actress, and——"

"Some other time!" I interrupted, smiling at him. "I have a job, Hazel hasn't. She's crazy to get into the movies—I'm not!"

Mr. Daft leans back in his chair and looks at me with the same curiosity he'd probably view me with if I was a four-headed mouse.

"Gladys," he says finally, "you're what I'd call a phenomenon of the first water! Offered a contract by ——"

"By the greatest director in the world!" I put in, still smiling.

"By—eh—by a director of standing," he corrects me, but he's pleased; "I repeat, offered a contract by a director, you refuse it and plug for your less capable girl friend. The fair sex—*fair* is right!"

"Or square," I says. "I rather like 'the *square* sex!'"

"Like it!" yells Mr. Daft, suddenly sitting straight up. "I *love* it! The Square Sex—a pip! *That's* what we'll call this picture, 'The Square Sex.' It means something, it fits, it will tickle the ladies! Well, I'll sign Miss Killian—that's that! But say, I wish you'd let me do something for you!"

"You can!" I says coolly. "You can write me a check for one thousand dollars for supplying your title."

"Yes—and I'll write you another for five thousand for supplying the punch!" he says, reaching for his pen.

A nice boy, now wasn't he?

A couple of days later Hazel, who knew nothing at all of the part I played in the sensational incident of the studio fire, got her contract from Mr. Daft. She woke me up and tossed it on my bed triumphantly. I looked sleepily at her flushed cheeks and delightfully tousled hair. She is a beautiful thing, really!

"Good for you!" I says. "I—I wish I could act!"

"I wish you could too, dear!" says Hazel jumping on the bed and smoothing my hair. "I hate to think of you moored for life to that old switchboard; you're so awfully pretty and such a darn good fellow, Gladys. But then we can't all be born with a talent for acting and I'll bet you have hidden gifts that are just as good as mine. I'll speak to Mr. Daft about you from time to time and maybe after a while I can work you in somewhere—I suppose he remembers you, all right?"

I looked at Hazel and smiled a smile that was wasted on her blissful ignorance.

"I suppose he does!" I says.

## CHAPTER IX

### BEE'S KNEES

*"How often things occur by mere chance which we dared not even to hope for!"*

According to the official records, the above bald statement was first made by a fellow called Terence who prowled around the bustling village of Carthage some two thousand years ago. This young Roman with the Dublin name was accused of being a poet, but I really believe your personal habits are nobody's business, so I'm not going into that part of it here. What I wish to say is that whether or not Terry was guilty of premeditated poetry, that crack of his about chance is at least one hundred percent correct.

Don't let anybody ever tell you there's no such thing as luck, for every man, woman or child who's managed to rear their heads above the mob has been more or less assisted to the dizzy heights by chance. I don't claim that mere luck will always put a dumbbell over, though it often does and you know it, but it's

nearly always luck that gives the person *with* the goods the opportunity to *deliver*. It's generally chance that snatches you from the ash-can of oblivion and stands you up there in the limelight. If you've got stuff, you get over, if you don't instantly click—well, they shut off the light!

Perhaps you know a few hundred shining examples of this yourself. So do I, but who the Berlin wants to listen to a few hundred examples of anything? I'll give you one—the case of two silken-clad limbs and a kind heart. Bee Swenson had the limbs and I had the heart.

I suppose you think me a very foolish young lady for not making the most of Mr. Daft's paternal interest in me, considering the position he's in to help me get somewhere. However, Gordon Daft is a bit too juvenile for the heavy responsibilities of guardian to a bouncing blonde infant like me. I wouldn't mind an extra male parent, but the bulk of the ambitious applicants aren't satisfied to be just "father," they want to be "sweet papa" and that's out!

At the trifling cost of going to lunch exactly once with Mr. Williams, I got Jerry and Pete their jobs back at the St. Moe. Should I have broken bread one more time with our admiring boss, I bet I'd have won Jerry and Pete portfolios as room clerks, no fooling!

Well, shortly after Hazel took up the exacting duties

of a motion picture actress, Mr. Daft hauled off and bought the film rights to "My Wife's Husband," a book which had the literary world and the censors positively agog. Honestly, this horrible example of what can be done with pen and ink in the wrong hands was as risqué as the tourists hope the Folies Bergère is and was selling like cheese at a rats' convention. If you happened to read it I'm satisfied you'll heartily agree that comparing that novel to cheese is a good thought. However, Hazel was awarded a nice little part in the picture which left me deserted in New York with only seven million other people for company. That's a trifle too many to crowd into my living room, really, so I didn't even try it, but stayed lonesome.

Mr. Daft took the troupe to Synthetic, Maine, on "location," as about fifteen miles of this film called for a rural setting and Pete Kift sold the director the idea of using a farm belonging to his parents. Pete's a smart boy and will argue himself into affluence yet. For the benefit of the lay reader, not so familiar with the technical language of the magic lantern game as I am, I'll tear the veil of mystery from the term "location." Going on location means that the boys and girls leave the studio, the watchful eye of the production manager, cost department, sightseers and spies from the New York office, hide away on a chartered yacht, an unpoliced island, hick town, desert, etc., and—clown.

Oh, of course they "shoot" some of the movie, too; in its proper turn. Movie actors hate location the same way they loathe close-ups, five-year contracts and publicity!

When I went to the station to *bon voyage* Hazel, she and Mr. Daft made me promise to take a week off and visit them at Synthetic the moment I found their absence beyond human endurance. As I knew our jovial manager would give me the lobby if I asked for it, I was sure he'd present me with a vacation if I got another girl to take my place. Eventually that's just what I did.

Then the merriment started!

A few days after Hazel left me all by myself in pitiless Gotham, an interesting young gentleman stepped into my life. His name in even figures was Royal Underwood Corona and he was a self-confessed author. He writes novels—read 'em and weep! I ran across him on Broadway, and "ran across him" is not poor English, it's true! I hit him with an automobile and made him like it; fate and a defective emergency brake brought us together—wasn't that thrilling? You see, I fulfilled a life-long ambition with some of that six thousand I got from Mr. Daft by buying a horseless carriage. This car was a great deal like myself; small but expensive and neat but not gaudy. It didn't take me any longer than it did you



to learn the secret of driving, although I still have trouble at times telling the clutch from the foot-brake. Really, the darn pedals *do* look alike, don't they?

Well, one afternoon I'm careening up the Great White Way in my brand new sport model Puddle-Jumper when at Seventy-Second Street a perfect idiotic traffic policeman decided to blow his whistle. I stepped on the gas by mistake and leaped past him, evidently to his vast astonishment, for he waved his hands wildly at me and blew that whistle like an annoying child. I managed to stop a little past the corner and immediately Mr. Policeman deserted his post to interview me, leaving the greatly peeved traffic in a hopeless snarl.

"What's the big idea?" he bellows at me, red in the face. "I told you to stop—didn't you see me wave my hand at you?"

"Yes, sir," I says, giving him lots of smile and eye-work.

"Then why the—eh—why *didn't* you stop?" he roars, pulling out his summons book.

I produced a blush—you can do it by biting your lip.

"I thought you were trying to flirt with me!" I murmured—and honestly, before that big fathead got over it I was two blocks away and bounding along great!

However, this was to be an eventful day, and full of grief for Gladys. Ten minutes after I defeated John

Law, Mons. Royal Underwood Corona jay-walked off the pavement and deliberately dented my front mud-guard with his body. Really, I thought at first I had ruined him and so did the pleased mob that quickly forgot their own affairs and rushed over to look at the catastrophe. An ant-hill is the only place on earth where a crowd collects quicker than on Broadway, you know that! But my prey was more burnt up than wounded and the moment he arose from the street he let out a frightful squawk.

"Why don't you learn how to drive?" he demands loudly, brushing off his clothes.

"Why don't you mind your own business?" I answered calmly. "If you don't like my driving, keep off the streets!"

The innocent bystanders hee-hawed gleefully and Royal glared at me with violence in each glittering eye.

"Shall I take you to a hospital?" I asked hurriedly. Honestly, he looked as if he had evil designs on my health.

"No!" he growls. "Fortunately, I'm not hurt—but that's no fault of yours, young lady! Don't you ever blow your horn to warn pedestrians?"

"Well, I used to," I admitted, "but it makes such a fearful noise it upsets my nerves and then I can't drive at all!"

He didn't seem able to cope with that kind of patter,

so he gave up and helped out the crowd with its laugh.

“You’ve made me miss a train and an important engagement,” he says severely. “Now I’ve got to go back to my apartment, change my clothes and——”

But out of the corner of my eye I had pegged an officer approaching. With me to think is to act.

“Jump in and I’ll drive you to your place,” I interrupted quickly.

“Fair enough!” remarks an envious voice from the throng. “Pretty soft for you, brother!” says another slapping Royal on the arm. Royal appeared to be giving the matter lots of due consideration, which irritated both myself and the greatly interested audience. “Go on, you dizzy tomato!” calls the third masculine voice angrily. “Flop in there with ’at cutey. You’re sittin’ pretty and ain’t got brains enough to know it. If *you* don’t want to go with her, they’s plenty others that will!”

Royal took a long lingering view of me and I guess what he saw didn’t cause him any pain. He smiled and at once became a nice-looking boy.

“Well, I don’t know,” he says, still grinning. “You are so lovely, and I am so poor——”

And then he hopped in beside me and we drove away just as the scowling policeman came up on the run to find out what the crowd was cheering about.

Really, we got along fine! I warned him at the go-in

not to bank too heavily on the fact that I was escorting him home, as I was merely doing so to escape embarrassment and that nosey policeman. That seemed to be in the nature of a severe disappointment for Royal, though I knew I'd be safe with him anywhere—in reason! What I mean is that even if Royal Underwood Corona wasn't the greatest writer since Moses, he was a perfect gentleman and acted that way. On the way to his domicile, we talked about this and we discussed that, till if you'd been on the rear seat and wasn't adverse to eavesdropping, why, you'd have thought we'd been in fifth grade together, honestly! He generously forgave me for running over him and not to let him outdo me in courtesy, I accepted his apology for denting my mud-guard. So *that* was all settled.

Then Royal suddenly decided he'd let his train go until the next day and began to promote himself. He was nobody's fool. Within a few minutes he had built up a dinner and theater engagement with me for that very same night. Now don't begin raising your eyebrows and curling your lip. It's all fun and there was nothing wrong in it, besides he'd been so nice about me colliding with him that I just couldn't refuse. I left him at the curb outside a beautiful apartment house on Central Park West, promising to be all set when he called for me that evening at seven.

"You certainly knocked me over, girlie!" he says, cautiously touching a bump on his head that looked painful. "The minute I saw you I fell for you—right on the asphalt!"

Well, Royal proved to be even more entertaining at dinner than he was as a motor companion and we had a nice time, really, in spite of the fact that I pulled one terrible fox pass right after we sat down to the nourishment.

"Have you read any recent novels—'My Wife's Husband,' for instance?" he asked me over the hearts of artichoke.

That was like asking Willie Hoppe if he ever saw a billiard table.

"Yes," I says promptly, "and I think it's terrible, don't you?"

He gave me an odd look. "Why, no—I wouldn't exactly call it *terrible*," he says, with a faint smile, "but then I imagine I'm a bit prejudiced in its favor. You see, I wrote it!"

Good night! A wonderful start for a pleasant evening, what? I rallied gamely and threw him a dazzling smile.

"You're easily kidded, aren't you?" I asked him. "I knew you wrote it, of course; I just wanted to get a rise out of you. As a matter of fact, I enjoyed the book immensely!"

"You did?" he says eagerly. "Well, that's fine. Thanks awfully!"

Honest to Coolidge, I didn't know Royal was the perpetrator of that literary outrage any more than I know how to make a clock. I'm no Dumb Dora, but seldom remember authors' names, though Francis Shakespeare's is familiar. But I got out of that jam nicely, didn't I?

At any rate, now that Royal's horrible secret was out, we had much to talk about. He had been on his way to board a train for Synthetic when the bumper of my car took his mind off his appointment. Royal was scheduled to assist Gordon Daft in the filming of his book, and when I heard *that* sensational news I devoted the bulk of the time to boosting Hazel to him. Before we called it a night and dismissed school, he had faithfully promised to fatten Hazel's part if it was in any way possible.

A week arrived and departed as weeks will and then Jerry Murphy and Pete Kift got their vacations. Both boys are set and rarin' to go to Synthetic, Maine, where Daft's actors are doing their stuff on Pete's farm. In spite of their previous sad experience, each of these first-class half-wits told me he was going to try and talk himself into a part in "My Wife's Husband."

"Why don't you check out of this drum and come with us to Synthetic, Kid?" invites Pete. "You'll get

a lot of laughs on the old man's farm, no foolin'! Then them movie friends of yours is up at that slab and we can throw a party every night. Our farm's worth important sugar today and only a few years ago pop bought it for a song!"

"What was the name of the song?" I asked him.

"I forget the words," says Pete, "but I remember the notes because I had to pay most of 'em off myself."

"C'mon, Gladys," urges Jerry, "tell 'at big boloney Williams you're tired of sayin' hello and you want to say good-by to him for a while!"

"Yeh," says Pete, "think of the fresh milk and eggs, the simple life in the country, the cows and chickens and that kind of stuff, which I loved so well that I left 'em flat on their shoulder-blades at the age of ten! C'mon up and watch me do a piece of farmin'. If I do say it myself, I milk a mean cow and pitch a nasty stack of hay!"

I thanked Pete for his kind invitation and told him I'd think it over. It didn't take me long to argue myself into the idea that I'd like to give Pete's farm a look-see, so I arranged a two week's furlough from the switchboard. Then I wired Hazel to meet my train, packed up and did a fade-out from the Hotel St. Moe.

Not only the beautiful Hazel, but Pete and Jerry are on hand when I tripped off the train at the little dilapidated station, bearing a weather-beaten sign,

"Synthetic." My playmates have thoughtfully brought along an ancient farm rig to drive me to the village, and Hazel, in movie make-up and a Colonial costume, attracts as much attention from the awe-struck yokels hanging around the depot as a fur overcoat would attract in Hades. She explained that she had been working all day and had to dash away to meet me just as she was. Honestly, the disturbance Hazel was creating amongst the natives would have been highly embarrassing to me, but it tickled my girl friend's vanity.

"This is a great tank—it's as dead as Napoleon," says Hazel as we drive away. "Most of the population belong in the comic supplements of the Sunday papers and nowhere else. I've got the male clowns all standing on their ears. I think I'll write Sears-Roebuck for a commission on mail order sales of Klassy-Kut Clothes that the local bloods have ordered to strut with for my entertainment. By the way, Royal Underwood Corona, the fellow who composed our movie, is up here. He's a cute kid, and I think I've goaled him!"

"See if I care," I says. "I've met the boy myself, in fact we broke bread together and caught a show in Manhattan just before I came up here."

Hazel's pretty face was a picture of bafflement and envy.

"For cryin' out loud!" she says peevishly. "It seems



to me you've fussed around with everybody but Columbus!"

"But *my* affairs are all harmless, Hazel," I remind her.

"Blah!" retorts my charming chum—and conversation lagged a bit.

Jerry and Pete told me that they hadn't yet convinced Mr. Daft that they were Grade-A actors, but they said they had great hopes now that I was in their midst. Pete kidded Jerry about winning the heart of his mother's hired girl, Bee Swenson, who Pete declared had a face like a jig-saw puzzle with the important key-pieces missing. This joshing seemed to greatly disturb the huge Jerry and he told me confidentially that if Bee was the last woman in the world and he was the last man, he'd take arsenic before he'd marry her! Both Pete and Jerry spoke affectionately of the farm's hard cider, which they swore had drug store gin and Long Island Scotch beaten forty ways for smoothness and potency. They said this stuff was the real McCoy and that Prohibition meant nothing in the life of a farmer—except that he helped put it over. Both of my boy friends seemed to have managed to get on the most intimate terms with Mr. Cider, particularly Peter.

"I didn't come back home a minute too soon, kid," he confides to me, swaying dizzily on the wagon seat.

"My lovin' parents was on the brink of gettin' a divorce, but I patched all that up!"

"Why did they want to separate, Pete?" I asked him.

"Oh, nothin' in particular," says Pete, "but they been wed over fifty years now and they're kind of be-ginnin' to get on each other's nerves!"

A loud and unseemly chuckle from Hazel appeared to steam Pete and he shut up like our useful friend, the clam.

Well, honestly, by this time it was getting as dark as Harry Wills and we seemed to have lost our way. Jerry, a total loss, had crashed asleep, and Pete didn't look exactly like a victim of insomnia. The alarmed Hazel said the road we were on wasn't even faintly familiar to her.

We came to a deserted crossroads in the gloom and I sent Pete ahead to read the sign-post. After using up a box of matches trying to read the sign, Pete staggered back.

"Well, what does it say on that sign?" I asked him impatiently.

"Hic—I think it says—hic—no smokin' allowed!" answers Pete, and collapses under the wagon wheels, burying his face to the hilt in the mud. Ain't we got fun?

However, we finally arrived at the home of Pete's

parents and they put me up very comfortably in a big bright room with Hazel. One of Peter's choice collection of brothers was sprawled all over the kitchen table, ravenously reading a three-year-old-magazine.

"Here, Frequent!" called his father. "Take the lady's grips upstairs!"

"Frequent?" I says, trying not to laugh in his son's weird features. "Isn't that a queer name for a human being?"

"Wal, you see, I was the eighth child," explained Frequent—and passed up the stairs with my suit-cases.

In a few days I'd fitted myself into the gay life on the farm as if I'd never lived anywhere else, really. I resumed my acquaintance with Mr. Daft and Royal Underwood Corona, who battled furiously day and night over the constant changes the director kept making in Royal's novel while filming it. In fact, Royal barked and meowed that Mr. Daft had put everything into the picture but the battle of Chickamauga and all that was left of Royal's original story was its name. In return, Mr. Daft coolly told the raging Royal that the company had bought his book, "My Wife's Husband," for its box-office title only and not for the story, which neither Mr. Daft nor anybody connected with him had read or had the slightest intention of reading. At that, Royal rushed out of the house tear-

ing his hair and fell on a hay pile in a hysterical condition!

One of the first persons I met on the farm was Bee Swenson, the hired girl that Pete claimed was wild over Jerry and greatly resembled a baboon. Well, after looking Bee over I was forced to admit that the hired girl had a face which must have greatly dismayed her parents when they first saw it. I felt awfully sorry for her, really; a glance at her would make any man remain a gentleman in her company no matter where they were! I didn't know then that Bee needed sympathy like I need a third ear. Bee had talents that more than overcame the handicap of her unbeautiful face!

Hazel and the unhappy Royal seemed to be getting along like sliced tomatoes and lettuce, while Mr. Daft fairly sprayed *me* with attention, but Synthetic itself and its inmates furnished me with sufficient in the way of amusement. There was old Judge Bass, former champion quoit pitcher of the county and now a contender for the checker title, who always announced to the children on his way to court, "Come right over—there's goin' to be a big hearin' this mornin'!" He'd then soak the unfortunate prisoners the limit, assuring them that they must have been guilty of whatever crime they were credited with or they wouldn't have been arrested. "Maybe I ain't so much on law," says Judge Bass, "but I'm strong on logic and no rapschal-

lion can fule *me!*" I learned later that a handsome city chap had once sold his Worship a ten percent interest in the League of Nations for five thousand dollars!

Mr. Daft called Judge Bass a find and commandeered him into "My Wife's Husband" in his judicial role, paying him twenty fish a day. That didn't stop his Honor from bearing down heavy on Pete and Jerry when they were pinched for serenading me at three o'clock in the morning. These two masterpieces of imbecility had told me they sang wonderful harmony and I said I'd like to hear 'em sometime. This set of scofflaws got saturated with that two-fisted cider and that night they gave me the promised treat. The un-called for open-air recital awoke the entire burg, including the constable, Mephistopheles Simpson, who took the choristers to the local hoosegow.

When they were brought before him, Judge Bass glared at the two trembling imported Broadway night-ingales and ordered 'em to sing the song for him. Pete and Jerry smiled nervously cleared their throats and rendered the following operatic tidbit from "Carmen" in tones that rattled the window-panes :

*Toreadora, don't spit on the floor,  
Use the cuspidora, that's what it's for!*

With his fingers in his dumfounded ears, Judge Bass angrily called a halt and fined the boys ten dollars

each, with the stern promise that if they ever came up before him again on a charge of singing, he'd send 'em to the penitentiary, where with those voices they belonged!

Then there was Ike Mason, the village blacksmith, who rowed an oversize dory ten miles out into the ocean and back on a bet. This feat of endurance, skill and lunacy took Isaac twenty-four hours and when he reached shore on the return trip it was found that the 100-pound anchor was overboard and dragging all the way. Also Hans Schmidt, the German shoemaker, whose loyalty was questioned during the war. Thereupon Hans sat down and personally wrote a song dedicated to the local draftees and entitled, "Ve Are Cam-ing py der Millions!" It cost Hans \$250 to get this horrible ballad published and he was nearly lynched when it was discovered that the tune was criminally close to "Deutschland über Alles!"

Likewise Abner Young, so miserly he wouldn't give his daughter a middle initial. Abner built a catboat in his cellar one winter and had to break the craft up to get it out. Then let me present "Shiftless," the town loafer, who was leading Judge Bass's horse across an open plank bridge over the lake when the fiery steed reared, slipped out of the neck halter and fell overboard. Shiftless, annoyed at the animal's capers, flung the halter in the bathing fluid after it and continued blithely on

his way. Or take Ulysses Grant Jones, the undertaker. Mons. Jones complained bitterly about the movie troupe's autos being parked in front of his place of business, on the grounds that "they're liable to prevent me from gettin' my bodies in!" And last but far from least, Hank Knowles, the druggist. Hank tired of moonshine, hard cider and plain alcohol, so he took a handful of prescriptions from his file, mixed 'em all up together and drank the result to get a thrill. He got one!

These and many others, too humorous to mention, kept me in a continual state of merriment and Mr. Daft seized upon them eagerly for "types" in his movie. He drafted the bulk of 'em as "extras" and soon had practically the entire metropolis working in the film, to the consternation of Royal Underwood Corona, who vainly protested at our super-director rewriting his book to fit these casual characters. Honestly, Mr. Daft even cameraed the mayor's trained dog, most of the town's babies and Zeb Whitcomb's prize two-headed calf.

The early rising and retiring hours, the wholesome food, the wonderful air and the fact that nobody knew where I was all made a decided hit with me, and I'm enjoying my stay immensely. I aided Pete's mother in putting up preserves and Pete showed me how to milk a cow. Neither me nor the bovine liked it.

But by far the most entertaining spectacle to me was

the devotion of Bee Swenson for Jerry Murphy. Bee's pursuit of the ungainly Jerry bordered on the unmaidenly. She waited on him hand and foot. She gave him the choicest delicacies at a table where delicacies were at a premium and stood around watching him in mute but quite open admiration. Jerry viewed these unusual attentions with disgust and alarm. Through Pete I learned that Bee was a rabid reader of detective stories, and ninety percent of her infatuation for Jerry was based on the fact that he was house detective at the St. Moe. Bee was a bit vague as to what "house detective" meant, but she was positive that Jerry was a combination of Nick Carter and Sherlock Holmes with a dash of Hawkshaw.

Jerry got one chance to display his prowess as a sleuth when the Kift rabbits strangely disappeared from the farm. The night that happened, Jerry went to retrieve them and at daybreak he returned with fourteen cabbage-leaf addicts. Pete's mother told Jerry he did a good job, and Bee admiringly added that Jerry's recovery of the fourteen bunnies was particularly good in view of the fact that they had only lost eight!

Enthralled by the movie atmosphere, Bee naturally desired to enter pictures, but her face was her misfortune. She told that to me and the scornful Hazel and also bragged about her affection for the unrespon-



sive Jerry, who she asserted was just "an elegant fellah!" I tried to get Mr. Daft interested but I might as well have tried to get him interested in ping-pong. However, I did manage to show Bee how to make her raven locks mean something and instructed her in the possibilities of a lip-stick and mascara. I likewise presented her with some raiment I was going to throw away anyhow. The result was a decided improvement. Bee wanted to pay me for the clothes and when I refused to accept, she said she'd saved forty dollars for something she'd wanted all her life and never had—silk undies. She added sorrowfully that probably nobody but herself would ever see her in 'em, yet nevertheless she'd personally get enough enjoyment out of standing before her mirror garbed in a sheer silk teddy to warrant any sacrifice.

This pathetic confession moved me to the point of giving Bee one of my prettiest combinations. The delighted Bee rushed to her room to don the lingerie and I went down to visit Jerry and Pete, who were confined to their beds, Pete as the result of upsetting a wasp's nest in search for more apples for cider, and Jerry through falling in the well. Royal came in while I was calling on the invalids, and in raving about the way Mr. Daft was murdering his story we got into a discussion on novels versus real life. Royal mentioned the farm as a place where nothing unusual would hap-

pen in ten generations, but being a strong believer that truth is stranger than fiction, I declared to the contrary. Royal's air of indulgent superiority captured my goat and I offered to prove I was right. I bet him a dozen pairs of silk stockings, intending to give them to Bee if I won.

About an hour later I happened to pass Bee's room. She called me in and I got the shock of my life. Arrayed in my discarded lingerie, Bee of the unlovely face had the most beautiful form I, you or anybody else ever saw! Honestly, her figure was a living definition of the word "ravishing" and it left me breathless with admiration for a work of art. From shoulders to instep Bee's every curve—and she had plenty—was an undiluted thrill, but her legs were her *piece de resistance*. As I gazed on Bee's dimpled knees I was certain that I was viewing the most entrancing pair of limbs in the wide, wide world. I wondered what the unimpressed Jerry would say if he knew—but you follow me, don't you?

Bee appeared to be unconscious of her remarkable charms, but I soon convinced her that she was a world beater. I pondered long after I left her on her peculiar and unfortunate predicament—possessor of the homeliest face and the most beautiful form in Christendom! I wanted to help Bee cash in on her attractions in some legitimate way, but I could think of nothing to assist

her. Mr. Daft wouldn't even consent to look at her in a bathing suit.

At this critical period, Scoop Murphy, Mr. Daft's press agent, appeared on the scene. Scoop wanted photographs of all the female legs in the company. Why? The Cant-Rip Hosiery Company had offered a prize of a thousand dollars, a gross of Cant-Rip stockings and several other inducements to the possessor of the world's most beautiful legs. Photographs were to be submitted without names—merely a mark of identification. Scoop hoped that one of Mr. Daft's employees would win the prize and the ensuing publicity, so he photographed the lower extremities of Hazel and the other girls who were working in Mr. Daft's picture.

Well, that thousand dollars looked good to me, so I entered my own limbs—unknown to Hazel—and then my thoughts immediately flashed to the beautiful legs of Bee. I explained the hired girl to Scoop and he was enthusiastic. Between us we overcame Bee's embarrassed objections to the—to her—immodesty of the thing, and photographed her fascinating legs.

Well, they finally finished filming "My Wife's Husband" at Synthetic and we all went back to New York, where, as I figured, the photo of Bee's knees was announced as winner of the Cant-Rip Hosiery Contest. Then plenty excitement! Scoop induced the hypnotized Bee to sign a five-year contract with Mr. Daft,

flooded the country with stories about her, how she was "discovered" by Mr. Daft on a farm, how her limbs have been insured for a hundred thousand dollars, etc., etc., etc.

Within two days you couldn't pick up a newspaper without seeing a photo of Bee's knees. She got offers to pose for noted artists, go into vaudeville and what-not. But the scream to me was Jerry! This almost Sherlock Holmes, realizing what he had lost, tried to win Bee, but she gave him the air haughtily. She was now Scoop's girl friend!

Bee was grateful to me for my assistance, but she gloated over Hazel's failure to win the prize. The ex-hired girl sighed that the fresh butter, milk and air, the cackling chickens, the mooing cows, the familiar haystacks and farmhands were now a thing of the past; Bee had exchanged these priceless things for noisy, stuffy, gaudy New York.

"You're sorry?" I asked her.

"Yes," says Bee, crossing her legs with raised skirt, a now unbreakable habit, "I'm sorry I didn't leave that darned old farm and come here long ago!"

As proof of my contention that anything could happen anywhere, I presented the case of Bee to Royal and won the dozen pairs of stockings—which I kept, as Bee had more stockings now than she'd ever wear!

A few days later I got a package in the mail from

Scoop. Opening it I found a photograph and a note. I won't annoy you with the picture, but here's the note:

DEAR GLADYS:

I am herewith returning the photo of your charming—er—limbs. It's too bad you didn't win with them. They'd win anywhere else, that's a cinch! I wish you'd autograph them and send them back to me.

Scoop

I looked at the picture. Then I gave a start. The legs in the photograph were undoubtedly beautiful, no fooling, they were immense. There was another thing about them that strangely interested me—they weren't mine! They were Bee's!

On the breakfast table was the morning paper and staring right at me was a photograph of the prize-winning limbs. I recognized a well remembered and unusual design on the stockings. Then I got the answer—in some way Scoop had mixed the photos up, *and the picture that won the prize was a picture of my legs, not Bee's!*

Well, naturally my first impulse was to rush to Scoop and disclose to him this serious mistake, thus dethroning the happy Bee. Scoop's wire was busy, which gave me a chance to reflect. Never again will I think—brains ruined Caesar! I thought a thing such as this was Bee's only chance to rise from oblivion. I have

other attractions, many more opportunities, so I decided to let matters stand as they were; and I was complacently gazing at my uncrowned but rightful heirs to the title of the world's most beautiful legs when Hazel enters.

"Can you imagine that hired girl winning?" asks Hazel indignantly. "Why, that contest was nothing but a frame-up! If my legs aren't prettier than that homely Scandinavian's, I'll eat 'em. Why, Gladys, even *yours* are as pretty as hers—you should have taken a chance and entered the thing!"

"I wish now I had," I says with an odd smile, "but then legs are so hard to identify, the judges might never have known mine from the others."

"Well, I would," says Hazel. "You have such a bony instep, dear!"

Don't you love that?

## CHAPTER X

### THE LAST SUMMER OF ROSE

ONCE upon a time a charming young man with the high sounding title of William Shakespeare hauled off and committed a play called "Romeo and Juliet." This frolic could easily be rated a first-class success as it is now in its fifteen thousandth week, with every indication that it will be a riot on the road. Along around the second act of this delightful evening at the theater, Romeo steps boldly to the footlights and hurls the following at the dumfounded audience:

*What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet!*

From then on the fun waxes fast and furious, but as the critics say, I won't disclose the plot and spoil the show for you. That one speech is all I'm going to take up now. Far be it from me to argue with Bill Shakespeare, but honestly I'm satisfied that the world's

champion playwright's foot slipped when he indicated there was nothing in a cognomen. I don't doubt that soap would furnish as much lather if it was called mush, that Coolidge would still be President if his name was Smith and that the income tax would be just as poisonous if we paid it under the head of outcome tax; but really, when a person is used to their own name for years and then is suddenly called upon to change it, it does affect he, she or its game. Honestly it does!

For today's lesson I offer the case of Hershel Rosenberg, a bellhop in the winter under his honest-to-Boston name, a prizefighter in the summer as "Kid Rose."

When they took away Hershel's name they took away plenty.

One morning during a lull in the daily hostilities, I'm busy doing nothing and just being myself when Jerry Murphy prowls up to the switchboard.

"Well, Cutey, what d'ye know?" he remarks with what he thought was a killing smile.

"Oh, nothing much—two and two's four, that's about all I'm positive of, Jerry!" I says. "What do *you* suspect?"

"Not a thing, kid," answers Jeremiah. "I ain't even heard no rumors. D'ye want to get a laugh?"

"You've already given me one of your photos," I says sweetly.



" 'At sounds like a dirty dig," says Jerry. "But then I never clout no women. We win a new bellhop this mornin' and if he ain't a clown, I'm a French pastry! He speaks English like he picked it up in Siberia. His name's Hershel Rosenberg and he hops a nasty bell, what I mean!"

"Where's he come from?" I ask idly.

"Dublin, of course," snorts Jerry. "As I was sayin', his name's Hershel Rosenberg, but 'at monnicker only goes when he's a bellboy. When he climbs into citizen's clothes, his name's Kid Rose, the box fighter. Personally I don't think this egg could punch his way out of a paper bag. He's only been workin' in this trap two days, but he's already got Pete Kift fit to be tied!"

"What did Hershel do to Pete!" I ask dutifully.

"Well, to begin with," says Jerry, waxing confidential, "Pete sends this master mind up with a pitcher of ice water to Mister Young in five-o-two. You know how liberal 'at old mock orange is—he ain't puttin' nothin' out. 'At baby would throw a drownin' man an anvil, any time. Well, in a few minutes old man Young comes boundin' downstairs squawkin' his head off. He wants to leave the St. Moe flat, he wants last week's rent back and he wants the manager's job. But most of all he wants Hershel Rosenberg's heart!"

"How come?" I asked, out of idle curiosity.

"Ha, ha, ha, ha!" cackles Jerry. "Oh, this is one for the book! Hershel tried to sell the old jazzbo the ice water and when Young wouldn't buy it at a quarter a pitcher, Hershel tells him to take a drink from the sink. 'Vot d'ye tink, ve get this ice for nothin'—you should run a hotel!' says Hershel and then he had to take it on the lam!"

At this minute Pete Kift came by to pay his respects.

"I'm just after tellin' Gladys about Hershel," says Jerry. "I understand he's givin' you a shovin' around and makin' you like it."

"I'll make that banana love it before I get through with him!" says Peter, bitterly. "I asked him this mornin' where he ever hopped bells before and he says he never was no good at rememberin' names. Can you tie that? If we wasn't short of boys I'd throw him out in the alley. As it is, I got him ruined—I put him on a elevator, where tips is as plentiful as mufflers in Hades!"

"'At's what *you* think!" grins Jerry. "But *I* think he'll cross you! 'At baby's no mug and if you figure he is you're crazy. He'll be chargin' the guests a dime a ride on his elevator as sure as you're born!"

Pete starts to laugh, frowns, looks thoughtful and then dashes off to see for himself.

A few days later I had the pleasure of making Her-

shel's acquaintance. He sidled over to the switchboard on his lunch hour, a thing that is as much against the St. Moe rules as hitting the manager with a slapstick. That, however, didn't appear to bother Hershel.

"They call me Hershel Rosenberg," he says, without any preliminaries.

"I can't help it," I says truthfully. "Take the air, Hershel, you're on a busy wire!"

"Say, don't put on dog vit me," says Hershel. "I ain't exactly vot I look like."

"See if I care," I says. "Do you know any more jokes?"

"Say, if I vos a goil and as pretty as you, I'd nevaire be no operator from a telephone," remarks this inveterate fool. "I'd go to work and, now, marry a rich millionaire and——"

"Tend to your own sewing, will you?" I butt in frigidly. "When I wish advice I'll go to a lawyer and when I wish to get married I'll marry whoever I please!"

"Vell, you please me!" grins Hershel. "So ve got *that* all settled!"

If I had Hershel's nerve I'd throw up my job and go through Gehenna with a line of foot warmers. But honestly, you couldn't get sore at him.

"What do you mean by saying you're not exactly

what you look like?" I asked him, to change the subject and also the predicate.

"Vell, I look like a bellboy, but I ain't," he explains. "I'm only a bellboy in the, now, vintaire time. In the summaire time it's too hot I should be vorkin' from a hotel. So from June to August I'm a fightaire. I'm Kid Rose, the sensational middleweight. In twenty-four fights I only been knocked out twenty times."

"Wonderful!" I says, trying without any success to keep from laughing in his face. "Did you win the other four?"

"No," says Hershel. "By a odd coincidence, I lose 'em on rotten decisions from rotten referees. But wait til——"

"Don't tell me any more about that, I can't afford to get hysterical on the job," I shut him off, wiping my eyes. "What was the idea of trying to sell the party in five-o-two that pitcher of ice water? If you hadn't been so grasping he might have given you a nice tip."

"Vot do I want vit a tip?" says Hershel. "I wouldn't play the races and I'm off from Vall Street. Say, a couple months ago a cousin of mine took a tip he should buy, now, Mexican Pete. Oy oy, vot a tip! You couldn't trust them Mexicans. My cousin lost his store, his car, his insurance policy, his house and his, now, vife!"

"It's a wonder he didn't lose his temper too," I says when I could talk.

"Say, vot's the matter—you're laughin' from me?" asks Hershel indignantly.

Just then Pete Kift comes up with murder in his eye.

"Get on that elevator, monkey," he hollers at Hershel, "or I'll knock you from under your hat!"

"Thenks just the same," says Hershel, moving away. "I could take it off myself!"

Thus Hershel.

Really, how this young man ever managed to hold his portfolio at the St. Moe is a subject for bigger brains than mine, but hold it he did. In spite of constant persecution from morning till night, he carried on smartly and clung like a cold in the head. Hershel was a little too burly for the other bellhops to trifle with and then that "Kid Rose" seemed to mean something to them too, but honestly, Jerry and Pete made his life positively brutal. That bothered Hershel the same way the income tax bothers an almshouse habitué; he was a silent partner in the noted firm of Grin & Bear It, an absolute gourmand for cruel and unusual punishment!

One day Hazel drags me off bodily to a private auction sale. Private auctions are the milk-fed Hazel's specialty; she bids as if she was playing pinochle

and I have yet to see her come home from one of these things with something of any more use to her than a second nose. While personally I could never cuddle up to them, there's a lot of our sex who go to these auction sales like they'd go to a show. They hang around all day, bid their heads off on every article offered for sale, eat the usual nifty lunch put out by the hoarse auctioneer and his merry men and then go home with a second-hand vacuum cleaner or something that cost them about four dollars more than they could get a new one for in a store.

Well, anyways, on this day Hazel and me ran amuck and blew about a hundred dollars each on a choice collection of knick-knacks that no self-respecting junk dealer would be found deceased with, really. The auctioneer rubbed his hands together and said we got a bargain for our hundred, but Hazel sneered that it was about the same kind of a bargain as we'd have got by paying a hundred dollars for a cauliflower. Mr. Auctioneer, who wasn't any more girlproof than the rest of 'em, then tries to promote himself with us and plied us each with a Japanese pin tray—value, about three marks. Always looking for the best of it, Hazel is talking herself into a carved mantel clock when I hear a familiar voice behind me and wheel to see the grinning face of Mr. Hershel Rosenberg, née Kid Rose.

“Vell, vell, vell—vot a small voidl it turned out to

be!" he says. "A feller couldn't go nowheres no more vitout he should meet somebody. How's it by you?"

"What are you doing here?" I asked him surprisedly.

"Vot's the matter—shouldn't I go places?" says Hershel. "Just because I'm a, now, bellhopper I don't have to hide ven I ain't vorkin', do I? C'mon vit me, I'll show you a real auction—McCue and Levy, over by Sixth Avenoo. Oy, vot bargains! Say, ven you walk out from that place vit your arms full of goods, you feel like a tief!"

Glancing out of the corner of my eye, I happened to see the feverish auctioneer presenting Hazel with that beautifully carved clock, in return for a phone number that would get anybody in the world but Hazel. Out of pure maliciousness I immediately introduced her to Hershel.

Hazel was an instantaneous hit with our dizzy boy friend and as my delightful room-mate likes anybody who can make her laugh, why, Hershel managed to get past. Honestly, he was just twice as funny as he should have been, because he had no idea he was comical—his delivery was all impromptu, if you know what I mean. He took us to his friends McCue and Levy where another auction was under way and when we left there at five in the afternoon we had more packages than Parcel Post himself. All articles we

needed like we needed scarlet fever. Hershel was busier than an ant with a bread-crumbs. He was all over the place—bidding for us, pointing out the auctioneer's "plants" in the audience, laying us off the apple sauce goods and telling us which was the bonded stuff. Hazel, who believes one and all guilty till proved innocent, said Hershel for making us buy probably got ten percent of what we squandered. That was doing Hershel a rank injustice, really. I found out afterwards he only got five percent.

While we're disrobing to commute to Dreamland that evening, Hazel gets inquisitive.

"Where on earth do you get those Johns like the one we met this afternoon?" she asks me. "You must have nailed that bird the minute he escaped from the immigration people."

Some day I'm going to send Hazel a present. I'm going to give her a nice box of catnip.

"You seemed to think he was pretty keen when he was paying for that vase you insisted on having," I says, a bit steamed.

"Blah!" says my lovely girl friend. "It only set him back fifteen dollars and the tears just streamed down his cheeks when he paid off. What's his trick?"

"He's in the hotel business," I says carelessly.

"He owns a hotel?" asks Hazel, sitting up straight with glistening eyes.



I pensively pulled back the covers of my downy bed.

"He's a bellboy," I says, having the time of my life.

"My Gawd!" gasps Hazel, dropping her hair brush.  
"*A bellhop*—and I gave him my address!"

"What you need is a guardian, Hazel," I purred with a smile.

"What we *both* need is keepers!" Hazel angrily cuts me off. "If that dialect comedian ever comes up here he'll run into nothing but grief. I'll about crown him with that vase he made me take!"

A week later, or maybe it wasn't, I'm sitting at the switchboard absorbing my daily dose of culture by reading the ads in the "Pacific Monthly" when a voice remarks:

"I vant Kin-al eight six five three vun and make it sneppy, please!"

In about four minutes I look leisurely up and see a heavy-set youth with an unquestionably broken nose and a face that is strangely familiar. He looks like someone I know, but I don't know who, get me?

"Ven you get 'em, say Kid Rose wishes to speak vit 'em," continues the handsome city chap.

"Kid Rose!" I says in astonishment, thinking of Hershel Rosenberg. "Are you Kid Rose?"

"Absolutely!" he says proudly, swelling up like a balloon, "I——"

"Say—what's your real name?" I interrupted.

"Do I have to pass a civil service examination to get a telephone numbaire here?" says the stranger peevisly. "I vos born in Koshva, I'm single, I got my foist papaires, I'm a fightaire, Vashington vos the foist President, I don't believe in the I. W. W. and my name is Rosenberg! Now could I get that telephone call?"

"Your name is Rosenberg?" I gasp. "What's your first name—Hershel?"

"No—Isaac," he says. "I got a brother Hershel. You know that lowlife?"

"He works here," I told him. "He's a bellboy and he also calls himself Kid Rose. Your family's a regular bouquet, isn't it?"

"Oy, catch me a gless of vataire!" says Ike, with a groan. "So that's vot he is—a bellhop, hey? *Gevhalt*, that's a business!"

"Which of you is the real Kid Rose?" I asked him, as curious as you are.

"Vy, naturel, I am, of course!" says Ike. "Hershel couldn't vin a fight if they should let him come in the ring vit a hatchet in each hand. He don't know a right hook from the timekeepaire!"

This affectionate brother then proceeded to give me the lowdown on his charming relative, and honestly it was rich. It seems that Ike Rosenberg, the real fighter

and cake provider of the family, had built up quite a reputation for himself as Kid Rose. On the other hand, Hershel Rosenberg had never been anything but unnecessary overhead as far as the old folks were concerned. Hershel liked work and arsenic the same way and had run away from everything from school to the probation officer in his home town, Idiotic, Wyoming. In his travels hither and yon, Hershel one day found a newspaper that somebody had hurled from a Pullman window and sitting beside the right of way he gave himself up to the vice of reading. On the sporting page he found this:

KID ROSE GETS FIVE THOUSAND  
FOR STOPPING FEARFUL FALLON.

That anybody should get five thousand for stopping or even starting anything interested Hershel highly, and when he read further that Kid Rose was no less than his loving brother Isaac, Hershel nearly swooned. Boarding the first freight, this boy scout dashed home to use his ingenuity on his brother's five thousand. Well, Hershel got service. Isaac divided the money with him—that is, he gave him ten dollars—and then kicked Hershel out of the house when Hershel claimed he was too heavy for light work and too light for heavy work.

However, all this gave Hershel an idea. He was

nobody's fool and he figured he was sitting pretty now. Not only did he look a great deal like his box-fighting brother, but he was also big and husky. There must be plenty states where Ike hadn't displayed his wares as yet, reasoned Hershel, and to those he gave his undivided attention.

According to Ike, it was Hershel's hobby to descend upon some medium-sized town where assault and battery was all the rage, sell himself as Kid Rose and get himself matched with a local expert at the art of breaking noses. His brother's reputation would enable Hersel to get big money for his appearance and his resemblance to the real Kid Rose was sufficiently close to befuddle what few had seen the latter perform. Once in the ring, Hershel was a pacifist of the first water and quickly claimed exemption, diving gracefully to the canvas the instant his vis-à-vis made a hostile move towards him. He would then collect his share of the purse and continue on his merry way.

What could be sweeter?

Honestly, for my part, after hearing all this I thought Hershel was a pretty smart boy, but brother Isaac was of a highly different opinion. Ike raved that Hershel was driving him to the poorhouse by using his name as a nom du ring. Hershel wins exactly never, whinnies Ike almost tearfully, and that detracts from his own earnings as the fight promoters get the boys

mixed up. They will not believe Ike's story that his brother is using his name and every time Ike happens to be away from New York, and Hershel, as Kid Rose, gets smacked down in some other village, the boxing impresarios around Gotham tell Ike he must fight for less money as the proxy knock-out has damaged his value as a drawing card. Ike has begged, threatened and bribed Hershel to take his beatings under some other name than Kid Rose and Hershel's only answer is to tell Isaac to cut himself a slice of pie!

When Mr. Winter bows out, Hershel Rosenberg, now Kid Rose again, resigns from the cabinet at the St. Moe to take up his annual summer tour around the country, clicking off pennies on his brother's fame as a boxer. Hazel, who heard the whole story, thought this was a scream and pointed out that the money-mad Hershel at least had a sense of humor, because he'd send her a telegram every time Ike won a fight saying, "I win again, kid!" The fact that Hershel's wire might come from Chicago and the battle had taken place in New Orleans made no difference whatever to the jovial Hershel Rosenberg. He was just a nice boy.

Well, both Ike and Hershel were conspicuous by their absence from my ken for quite a few weeks. I guess I would have forgotten about them if Jerry Murphy and Pete Kift didn't keep them alive in my

memory with anecdotes of the fox passes Hershel pulled while a bellhop at the dear old St. Moe. Then one day friend Isaac's bulky form suddenly looms up at the switchboard. Honestly, the boy is a photograph of gloom. He looked fearfully low!

"Greetings," I says pleasantly. "Long time no see—how come?"

"Maybe you seen that lowlife brother of mine, hey?" says Ike mournfully.

"No, I haven't seen Hershel either," I says, telling the truth. "But I read in the paper the other day where Kid Rose was knocked out in one round by somebody or other in Boston. Which one of you boys was *that* Kid Rose?"

"That vos Hershel," wails Ike. "I ain't vorked in a couple of months on account from that bum! I couldn't get no fights vile he keeps gettin' himself knocked stiff and the promoters think it's me. Honest, for vot I think about that feller they could send me back to Russia! Ven I tell 'em about my brother, they chuckle at me. I would give a tousand dollars—vell, maybe five hundred dollars—for a idea to make Hershel quit bein' Kid Rose."

I thought this one over for a few minutes while I'm plugging in wrong numbers and Ike tells his troubles to Pete Kift, who happened to saunter along.

"Hello," says Pete to Isaac. "I see where you got

slapped for a bath-house again the other night. They lay you like a carpet, don't they?"

"Shut up!" Ike howls, covering his scalloped ears with his hands. "That vos my brother, not me! *Oy*, should I get my hands on Hershel, I'll——"

"Hold everything!" I interrupt. "Listen, are you really in earnest about paying five hundred dollars for a way to make your brother stop advertising himself as Kid Rose?"

"In earnest?" says Ike. "Say, I must of been insane! You got a idea?"

"Positively!" I says. I speak several languages.

"Vell, I'll give you a hundred dollars for it, should it be good," says Ike after a minute. "But I wouldn't pay another nickel if you cry all over the place!"

That burnt me up.

"Look here, young feller me lad," I says. "I simply cannot do any heavy thinking for such a piffling sum as a hundred dollars. Really, that thrills me about as much as it thrills a deep-sea diver to step into a bath tub. But for five hundred——"

Ike pulls a roll of bills from his pocket.

"Here, take the three hundred," he says. "I ain't nice to argue vit a lady. Vot's your scheme?"

"Five hundred dollars or I don't turn a wheel!" I says firmly.

"*Oy*, vot a voman!" moans Ike, handing over the

other two hundred on the verge of tears. "How vos everybody in Moscow ven you left 'em?"

Well, my suggestion to Isaac was simply that he and Hershel meet in the ring for the right to wear the much coveted title, "Kid Rose." Ike had told me that he and his brother were both the same weight, except that Hershel was a little heavier above the ears. The winner could continue to say it with uppercuts as Kid Rose, while the loser would have to bear up and be content with the label pasted on him by his fond parents. I pointed out to the skeptical Ike that this scheme had plenty to recommend it, apart from offering a permanent solution to his problem. For instance, with proper publicity, a fight between two brothers each claiming the same ring name would be sure to draw a record crowd, especially as the alias at stake was so well-known. I presented other arguments, equally strong if not stronger, but why take up your time with them? Let it be enough to say that I finally got Ike sold on the idea that my plan was a good thought and he departed to proposition Hershel.

So that you won't perish from curiosity, I'll come right out pointblank and tell you that the boys fought as per my recipe and Ike was returned the winner, with the right to call himself Kid Rose forever and a day. I say they fought, but really that's a rather reckless use of the verb. Before a howling mob that jammed



the **Manslaughter** A. C. in Jersey City, Isaac put his affectionate brother down and out with one enthusiastic punch on the jaw about two seconds after the start of the first—and last—round. Honestly, I felt terrible about it and something more than sorry for Hershel, but Hazel laughed herself sick. Jerry and Pete, who escorted us over to the catastrophe, sneered that both Ike and Hershel were false alarms and Jerry declared he wouldn't be afraid to choose either of them. Pete remarked airily that he'd like to take them both on at once; but neither of these heroes yelled loud enough for the Rosenberg boys to hear.

The mere fact that his brother had knocked him from under his former cognomen didn't appear to disturb Hershel's activities as a boxer. As plain Hershel Rosenberg now he continued to browse around the country, collecting various and sundry amounts for giving an uncannily correct imitation of a punching bag. I kept in touch with him by scanning the sport pages. Thus:

*Milwaukee, July 6. 28-Punch McWagon knocked out Hershel Rosenberg in the second round of a scheduled twelve-round bout here last night. The men are middle-weights.*

The reports were always the same, except for the name of the town where the crime took place and the

pugilist who assaulted our boy friend. Really, Hershel didn't seem able to cope with any of them!

A couple of months came and went before I had the extreme pleasure of gazing upon Hershel's battered features again. However, he strolled into the lobby one day, swapped a few lies with Pete and Jerry and then roamed over to me.

"Vell, how's all the telephone numbares today, eh?" is his greeting.

"Busy," I says. "How's our champion?"

"Not so good!" says Hershel. "Ven I lost that name Kid Rose I lost plenty! I couldn't fight no more vit-out it. Y'know, all this time I been used to bein' introduced to the customaires as Kid Rose. Vell, now the announcer says, 'Over here, ve have Hersel Rosenberg, the Divin' Venus!' and that kind of upsets my, now, stomach. I ain't used my real name for so long that I couldn't even get knocked out properly vit it."

"How's Ike?" I asked him.

"I should care!" growls Hershel. "There's a brother! You seen vot he done in that fight ve had in Joisey City. He's afraid to take a chance, vit me in a long fight, so he goes to vork and knocks me out in the, now, foist round. Honest, he vos scared stiff!"

"But you were *knocked* stiff!" I gently reminded him. "Hershel, why don't you give up boxing and stick to bellhopping? It's less wearing on the features

and it certainly don't look like you're ever going to get anywhere in the ring, now does it?"

"Vell, maybe you're right," sighs Hershel. "I got to fight One-Feint Heehaw, middleveight champeen of Baffin's Bay, in Madison Square next veek. If I lose, I'm through! No more boxin' in the summaire time for me, I——"

"It'll be the last summer of Rose, eh?" I couldn't resist butting in.

"Absolutely!" says Hershel. "I'm commencin' to get sick and tired of dustin' off the canvas vit my, now, shoulder-blades. But vit proper handlin' I could positively beat this One-Feint Heehaw. Up to date I ain't had nothin' in my cornaire but a bunch of lowlife kidders, which all the advice they could give me between rounds is to tell me how rotten I am. Vot do I need seconds to tell me that for—don't I know it?"

"Why don't you get your brother to be your second in this bout with One-Feint Heehaw?" I asked him, struck by a sudden thought. "Ike knows a lot about boxing and being your brother you'd have confidence in him. If——"

"Say—you're a vondaire!" Hershel cuts me off excitedly. "That's just vot I'll do. I'll get Ike he should go behind me and I'll knock this feller Heehaw for a ghou! I nevaire seen nobody like you for, now, schemes. You got more ideas than Edison!"

Honestly, if Mons. Hershel Rosenberg had had the faintest ideas as to what would be the result of that clever suggestion, I'm satisfied Hershel would have murdered me right then and there in hot blood!

Hershel managed to talk his brother into seconding him and then the fighting bellhop went in training for his petting party with One-Feint Heehaw. Hershel's idea of getting in shape for this bout was to have his nails manicured and I think he got shaved—I'm not sure about that. Anyhow, when the night of the big fight rolled around, Hershel got his first setback. He was just one pound overweight and the laughing manager of One-Feint Heehaw collected his five-hundred-dollar forfeit. Gnashing his pearly teeth, Hershel remarked that all the Shylocks are not Jewish. Really, that untoward pay-off was poison to Hershel, who was so tight he wouldn't even harbor a fear.

Our party at the shambles consisted of Hazel, Pete, Jerry and your correspondent and we had to wade through a crowd that would make you think there was nobody at the Dempsey-Firpo scuffle but the reporters. Hershel was the first to enter the ring—his body cocoa-battered, face vaselined to prevent cuts, as Jerry explained it, and a grim look on his slightly irregular profile. He was greeted with mingled cheers and jeers and politely acknowledged both. Hazel, the money

addict, had bet heavily on Hershel for some reason known only to herself and she cheered him loud and lustily. Hershel immediately arose and bowed solemnly to the opposite side of the ring from where Hazel was sitting.

“’At’s the tip-off!” says Jerry disgustedly. “’At big tomato don’t know what it’s all about. He won’t last a round with this guy Heehaw. I seen ’at baby go—he’s as tough as a year in the pen.”

“Leave my fighter alone, stupid!” says Hazel irritably. “What do you know about boxing?”

“I know enough not to do it,” says Jerry. “’At’s more than ’at maniac does!”

Further discussion and possibly violence was prevented by the entrance of One-Feint Heehaw, a villainous-looking, bullet-headed facsimile of a gorilla. He was welcomed with riotous applause and tried out a smile on the admiring mob. Honestly, the result was so horrifying that Hazel and me shuddered and hid behind Jerry’s broad back. The crowd breaks into an excited buzz of incoherent conversation as the men are called to the center of the ring for the referee’s instructions. One-Feint Heehaw looks Hershel up and down sneeringly and then turns to the referee.

“Do I walk to the ropes and wait for the count every time I knock this chump down?” he asks the grinning official.

"Oy!" gasps Hershel to Ike. "Vot a rough von I picked for myself tonight!"

"Sssh!" says Ike. "Don't let him kid you. They ain't none of 'em rough ven they're on the floor."

"Maybe," agrees Hershel. "But the thing is—how d'ye get 'em there?"

"Are you guys gonna fight or do a act?" asks the referee. "This is a ring, not no theayter!"

The next minute the panic was on!

The instant the bell rang, One-Feint Heehaw sprang from his corner and hit Hershel with a terrible blow right on the nose. The only witty retort Hershel could think of was to sink slowly to the canvas with a rather reproachful expression on his face. "Knock him dead, Heehaw!" howls the mob and a patron in back of us, slightly under the influence of Volstead antidote, added sleepily, "Go on, you tramps, knock each other out!" Hershel arose as the referee reached "seven" and his brother Ike immediately yelled, "Bore in, Hershel, bore in!" One-Feint Heehaw had other plans for Hershel, however, and drove him across the ring with a volley of punches that kept poor Hershel plenty busy trying to keep from being exterminated. In the midst of this furious mix-up, some comedian in the gallery convulsed the crowd by bawling. "Hey, Hershel, you're wanted on the phone!"

So far it was just a case of guffaws with nobody

hurt—except Hershel. Above the roar of the mob Ike's voice rose hysterically in what soon became a chant, "Bore in, you sap, bore in!" Hershel tried manfully to follow his brother's instructions, but really, it wasn't Hershel's night. One-Feint Heehaw, who figured it was more blessed to give than to receive, was simply making a chopping block out of him. Honestly, it was pitiful. Hazel was on the verge of tears. For Hershel? Be yourself. For the dimes she was losing on him!

Suddenly Hershel, with a despairing effort, woke up and began to take an active interest in his assassination. For a full minute these cavemen stood toe to toe and exchanged blows that would have killed anybody else but them. The crowd was now just twenty thousand lunatics and the noise awoke our friend behind us, Mr. Intoxicated. This hard-boiled young man blinked his eyes, looked up at the two panting, wildly punching warriors whose efforts had the mob in a frenzy and remarked loudly: "They're just a couple of stallin' bums. Make 'em fight or throw 'em out!"

"My Gawd!" gasps Hazel. "You'd find fault with a lynching!"

But our critical friend was asleep again.

When Hershel came staggering to his corner at the end of the first round, honestly, he was as weak as a cup of boarding-house tea. He had hit the floor either five

or thirty-six times and looked every inch of it. Ike disgustedly waved a towel in front of his brother's bruised face while the other seconds sponged off his reddened and heaving body.

"If you'd bore in there like I tell you, you'd put this feller away!" says Ike to Hershel. "Vot's the matter from you—couldn't you hear me? This tremp don't like it—bore in there and stay close vit him!"

"Huh?" says Hershel, rolling his eyes glassily.

The bell cut off Ike's peevish oath.

Hershel gamely got to his feet and rushed to the center of the ring just in time to keep an engagement with One-Feint Heehaw's left glove. After carelessly ejecting a couple of teeth that were of no further use to him, Hershel looked wildly to his corner at Ike. "Bore in!" howls Ike. Instead, Hershel led with his chin to the point of Heehaw's right glove and then sat down quickly on the floor to think things over. He reached some sort of a hasty decision with regard to his future and was up at "nine," about as steady as a flagpole in a hurricane. One-Feint Heehaw sprayed him with punches and Hershel ran frantically backwards all around the ring. Ike seemed to be on the verge of a fit. "Oy!" he hollers. "Vot a fightaire—bore in, I tell you, *bore in!*"

For the first time that evening the good-natured Hershel got irritated.



"Say, leave me alone!" he pants. "How could I bore in vit a human buzz-saw like this feller? You should bore in vit him!"

This innocent answer seemed to get Ike red-headed. Before anybody had the faintest idea of what was in his mind, Ike jumps into the ring and caught Hershel with a terrible uppercut right on the jaw. Hershel went down as cold as a glance from a glass eye!

"*That's* the vay to bore in!" yells Ike hoarsely; and while the dumfounded crowd is still crazy at this amazing turn of affairs, a punch that One-Feint Heehaw had started for the inert Hershel caught Ike flush on the chin. Isaac flopped almost on top of his brother, a total loss. Mr. Pandemonium immediately took charge, Jerry and Pete hustled Hazel and me out with the aid of some hysterical coppers and that's the last I saw of the two Roses from that day to this!

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FOOL FOR SCANDAL

*"There's a lust in man no charm can tame,  
Of loudly publishing our neighbor's shame!"*

THIS intelligent crack was originally whinnied eighteen hundred years ago by a snappy young Eyetalian limerick writer who I've decided to refer to as Juvenal, as that's how he referred to himself. By a strange freak of circumstances, I didn't have the pleasure of knowing Juvy personally, mainly because in the fiscal annum of 124 A.D. I was far too immature to go out with the boys. I absorbed the above poetry from a novel called "Satires", presented to me as an Arbor Day gift by one of my countless admirers at the Hotel St. Moe.

Really, giving *me* a book of poems is about five-eighths as sensible as sending passes for the Follies to the blind men's home. I'm not too ignorant to appreciate poetry, simply too busy. The only bound volume I get a chance to peruse in the day time is gotten out

by the telephone company and when the shades of *night* begin to fall—well, I generally have plenty other places to browse around in besides the pages of somebody's book, *you* know that!

Before I lost my literary complex I used to be crazy about reading, though—Honest to McAdoo, I was a regular addict! For no reason whatsoever, I bought whole armfuls of best sellers, encyclopedias and what-not, including those pamphlets on first-class etiquette containing the answers to such burning questions as "Should she have asked him in?" and "Does *your* face flame with shame when you can't figure out which fork to use on the salad?" Honestly, I even read history and similar dizzy fiction till I got all cultured up—and all fed up, too!

I get no more thrill anymore out of an evening with the classics than Noah would get out of an April shower. I think they're all blah, no fooling! You can figure me a total loss if you like, but I know plenty of people who don't say "ain't" or raucously gargle their consomme and yet suspect that Mr. Woolworth wrote "Nicholas Nickleby" and that Boccaccio is an Eyetalian pastry.

Then again, gentle customers, why should I fritter away my sparse spare moments trying to get synthetic experience and a second-hand kick out of antique books? From my perch on the hotel switchboard I

see a little more life daily than a judge and a little less than a taxi driver. Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, lawyer, doctor, merchant-chief—they all pass in constant review before me in the gorgeous lobby of the St. Moe.

But to get back to the topic of reading; magazines and newspapers are *my* favorite brain massagers, really. If you crave descriptions of life as it *should* be, the magazines will give you lots of service. If you want life as it *is*, the daily papers are on the job with drama, comedy, tragedy, romance and thrills—practically fresh every hour! The heroes and heroines are real people, even as you and I. The ambitions, success, griefs, adventures and mistakes of billionaire and boot-black are served up piping hot to feed your hungry curiosity. Especially the mistakes. How we do love to see each other slip on the banana peel Chance and fall in the mud puddle Disgrace. Monsier Juvenal had the right dope—the average human is a fool for scandal!

For instance, let's take Tommy Brown, née reporter for the *Evening Wow*. I say let's take him, but it really borders on the brutal to pick on the boy further, for he spoke out of turn and New York took him plenty! However, Tom has one distinction that makes him stand out from the mob. He's absolutely the only living male in captivity that Hazel ever did *anything* for without a return—and she did *that* for *me*!

Hazel Killian is still in pictures, but Mr. Daft swears by his puttees and megaphone that she cannot troupe, as she can only think for about ten feet of film, but Hazel has two wonderful reasons for believing she'll sooner or later click on the screen—both reasons are usually encased in the modish champagne-colored silk stockings. In fact, Hazel's last heavy boy friend, broke in heart and in pocket trying to make her see matters *his* way, once dolefully remarked as he thoughtfully watched Hazel climb a Fifth Avenue bus that she should be arrested for carrying concealed weapons. My fascinating chum lays her failure to goal Mr. Daft to the fact that she once committed the mortal sin of uttering the adverb "No" in the projection room, the "Yes" men's paradise!

Well, nobody but a visitor from dear old Gehennæ can properly appreciate mid-summer in New York. Honestly, when Mr. Sun gets the proper range and bears down on Gotham along around August, you can light a cigarette from the pavements and get a coat of tan in the subways! So one torrid day when our jovial mayor had given Hon. Humidity the freedom of the city, I decided to stake myself to an afternoon off. Really, I just *had* to abandon that switchboard, for one more "Is it hot enough for you, girlie?" would have driven me twelve feet past insanity!

When I arrived at our fashionable uptown apartment

—ahem!—I found friend Hazel in a tantrum. We usually keep several tantrums handy, it's a well-appointed place.

Being temporarily fluent with money, we had advertised for a maid to do the cleaning, answer the bulk of Hazel's lavish phone calls and otherwise give us a fair break for about seventy-five a month. We should be annoyed about hoarding jack—you can't take it with you when you decease, because there's no pockets in a shroud!

Hazel leaped up in alarm when I let myself into our domicile.

"My Gawd! What are *you* doing home this early—did the St. Moe give you the air?" she gasps.

Wouldn't Hazel be a panic on a welcoming committee?

"Sit down and don't be so boisterous!" I says, throwing a twenty-dollar chapeau on what would be a chaise longue if it wasn't a sofa, "Haven't *I* got as much right to a holiday as you have? You act as if *you* were a guest here, or something!"

"I'm resting between pictures" remarks Hazel haughtily, striking a Ritzy pose.

"Listen, Hazel" I says, "Don't try to high-hat *me*—I knew you when you thought Caviar was a tenor! Did you manage to sign up a slavey this morning?"

This innocent question seemed to have the same

effect on our heroine that a sedlitz powder has on a glass of water. Honestly, she wheeled around on me in a young fury.

"Don't talk to *me* about maids!" she says angrily, "I've had all the charwomen this morning that I can take. If any more of 'em show up, *you* can entertain 'em!"

"There, there, little girl!" I smiled, patting her on the shoulder soothingly. "Tell me your story—perhaps *I* can right the wrong and——"

"Oh, cut the comedy!" Hazel rudely interrupts, wrenching away from me, "I'm in no mood for that applesauce now. I'm so steamed up I feel like kicking a few window-panes out, just to be nasty!"

"You're dizzy!" I says. "If you wish to confirm the neighbors' suspicions, there's much less costlier ways than that. Stop squawking and tell me what happened to you this morning—you've got me tantalized to death!"

"Well," says Hazel. "When no candidates appeared up to ten o'clock in answer to our ad, I decided to give this drum of ours a thorough cleaning myself—you needn't laugh, me and labor have met before! So I put on that old brown smock you insist should go to the Salvation Army, rolled up my sleeves and tied in. I was busy saying it with the vacuum cleaner when the first volunteer stabbed the doorbell. This entry, who

looked like she stepped right out of somebody's nightmare, was a gayly caparisoned importation from either Latvia or the one next to it. Her English wasn't much better than ours and——”

“I love *that!*” I butted in, “Speak for yourself—there ain't a thing the matter with *my* grammar!”

“Yeah?” sneers Hazel, “Well, see if you can find ‘ain't’ in the dictionary! Anyhow, when I opened the door that schoolgirl complexion was still in the cans on the dressing table, the skin they love to touch was covered with soot, my hair was in an uproar and you know how that old torn smock looks. I admit I was exactly assembled for a dinner party at the Ambassador. Well, this immigrant takes one long, lingering look at me, sticks up her nose and before I can proposition her she flounces out, remarking that she's not going to work for nobody that looked worse than she did herself!”

Oo la la! I can imagine how *that* crack ruined the highly self-satisfied Hazel!

“Well, don't cry,” I says, “As Congress tells the Japanese, it's all in fun! Suppose we go down to one of the beaches and see if we can foil this heat. It must be all of a hundred and eighty in the shade, really!”

“We'll never have any decent weather as long as the forecaster's job is a political appointment!” says Hazel, “But that beach idea of yours is the elephant's brassiere. Let's go down and teach the fishes how to swim. Warm



puppy! I'm full of pep and no control! I just bought a bathing suit that——"

"I saw it" I interrupted, "And you'd better take along enough change to pay your fine. All that costume conceals is your religion!"

"Is that so?" says Hazel, curling her lip, "Well, that sea-going negligee of *yours* is one garment that calls for beauty—and courage—on the part of its wearer, believe me!"

"What of it?" I asked her "Haven't I got enough of both?"

"Don't let's fight" yawns Hazel, "It's too hot."

Well, as we can each dress as fast as any firemen in the world, we're motoring to Long Beach within the hour to find out for ourselves just what the wild waves were saying. Honestly, had I known what was going to happen to *me*, I'd have stayed home and listened to the rollers over the radio!

Leaving the bath house, dressed to thrill, we found the beach just littered with likely young men and that coincidence immediately removed Hazel's desire to plunge into the briny. Even *I* had to admit that my beauteous room-mate was something to think about in a bathing suit, especially, in that lo and behold one she was wearing. As far as *that* part of it goes, the boys didn't seem disposed to laugh *me* off either. Several masculine gasps of admiration—which we divided

evenly between us—strengthened Hazel's resolve to strut her stuff and leave the ocean to its proper inhabitants, the fish. However, *I* came down to the sea to swim, a gift I was very agile at in my beauty-contest-winner days, two or three years ago.

Hazel by no means got hysterical with grief when I told her I was going to leave her flat and do a piece of bathing. She was busy dazzling the handsome life-guard with her charms. So I waded bravely in, ducked under to get that first horrible chill over with and struck out boldly for the diving float, tethered some distance from the beach.

Then the fun began!

For some time I'd achieved the bulk of my swimming in a bath tub and with a wildly palpitating heart I soon discovered that I'd more than misjudged both my strength and the distance to the float. A treacherous undertow made things more thrilling and regardless of what the record may be, I know *I* was averaging fifty-five waves swallowed with each frightened gulp. I was satisfied that as a mermaid I was a first-class telephone operator and this was one time I'd have been double willing to change my name—to Annette Kellermann, for instance!

Thoroughly scared and as weak as seven days, I was seriously in need of one standard-sized, regulation full-blooded hero, when a young man filed his application.

At least, I thought thankfully, as I saw him dive gracefully off the float and swim towards me, if he *wasn't* a hero he'd certainly do till one came along!

Well, to prune a long story, it turned out that the stranger negotiated a wicked wave and he towed me to the diving platform in safety. Barring the laughing seagulls we were alone there and as soon as I got back my breath and my dignity, introductions were served.

My brave rescuer made a clean breast of being Thomas Brown, a newspaper man, and while he would never be mistaken for Valentino he had lots of stuff, really. He was a nice, clean-cut looking kid and I wasn't a bit burnt up when his searching, candidly admiring gaze swept my shivering and not exactly hidden form. Honestly, he was a pleasing change from those cake addicts at the St. Moe, who disrobe you with a glance! He had powder-blue eyes, a weakness of mine, and of course I didn't hold his dare-devil rescue of me against him, either.

"Well," I says, smiling sweetly on Thomas, "I'm certainly glad to check out of the bounding main! If it hadn't been for you, I might be down kidding Mr. Neptune, now. It was nice of you to go overboard for me and I won't forget it!"

"I've gone overboard for you in more ways than one!" says Thomas enthusiastically, "I think you're the prettiest girl I ever saw in my life and I've looked

at plenty! No fooling, you've got more curves than a French Horn and——”

“That's out!” I interrupted severely, moving toward the edge of the float. “Be yourself, you're not at home now!”

“But I don't mean anything wrong,” he says quickly. “I just like you and you're going to like *me*, too, when you know me better. Let's see—this is Monday, isn't it? Well, tonight we'll have dinner together and see a show, tomorrow I'll take you to the ball game, Wednesday we'll go to the races and dance somewhere at night, Thursday we'll have tea at the Ritz, Friday we'll take a nice long auto ride, Saturday we'll watch a good movie and Sunday we can stay home in your parlor—because by *that* time, I'll be down to my last friend's last dime!”

Don't you love that?

“Tommy,” I smiled. “You're all wet!”

But, really, that didn't even slow him up. I guess he thought my remark applied to his water-soaked bathing suit! He persisted in trying to build himself up with me for the next half hour or more and sold himself so successfully that at last I agreed to one dinner engagement. Ladies must eat!

When, apropos of nothing, I casually mentioned the fact that I was created at Bountiful, Utah, Thomas delightedly rose to remark that we were the same as

neighbors, as *he* first became a problem to his parents in the metropolis of Panquitch—a paltry three hundred miles away from my home town. According to Tommy's confession, he toiled and spun on the Panquitch *Weekly Whine*, till he found out that he, one of the outstanding members of the great white-collar class, was paying rent to a greasy laborer who got three dollars a day more than Thomas did. That discovery gave my new found friend the hibby jibbys. It likewise fired him with a burning ambition to leave the great open spaces where a man's a man and come to New York, where there's less landscape and more opportunity. No sooner said than done! Tom dashed into Manhattan a month before and had since been doing his stuff on the staff of the *Evening Wow*. But alas, ah me and alackaday! That newspaper was sheering off expenses and as my vis-à-vis was the last man to join the payroll, he's due to be the first to leave it.

As we delved further into the life and struggles of Thomas Brown, he told me he was madly infatuated with the newspaper game and also with food. For that reason, he wants to do everything else in the world but lose his job. Incidentally, the *Evening Wow* is for sale and Tommy is sure he'll be solid for life with whoever the buyer may be, if he can only excavate some exclusive news "beat" that will dumfound New York.

How to accomplish this difficult feat is beyond

Thomas at the moment. While I listened in sympathetic silence, he told me bitterly that when anything new or startling happens in Gotham, ten minutes later the story is about as exclusive as Central Park! Dramas, novels and movies to the contrary, says Thomas, cub reporters on metropolitan dailies get scant opportunities to save the day and likewise the paper by rushing in to the overjoyed city editor with the news beat of the year. His particular city editor happens to be a scandal 'hound, claiming that it's those kind of stories which sell the newspapers, so Tom has been trying manfully to dish up some dirt for Mr. Constant Reader. So far, however, the most important happening Thomas has been assigned to "cover" was the Ninety-Eighth Annual Banquet of the Surgeon's & Steamfitter's Union—and *that*, sighs Tommy, was postponed!

Well, really, me and Tom became so interested in each other that it took the combined efforts of a chill breeze, a rising, choppy tide and gathering dusk to remind us that we were still on the float. I couldn't get Thomas to listen to the idea of me *swimming* ashore—he was already at the masterful and protective stage, you know. By some extremely unmodulated shouting and arm waving, my tête-a-tête managed to attract the attention of Hazel and her boy friend, the lifeguard, on the now uncrowded beach. They watched

us curiously at first and then in alarm. After a brief conference with Hazel, Mr. Lifeguard reluctantly broke out a boat and with Hazel acting as coxswain he rowed out to us and ferried us back. So that was that.

When me and Hazel got into our habitation that evening, she at once turned on the line I've learned to expect from her whenever a John sees *me* first.

"You're always bawling *me* out for my innocent flirtations" she says, "Yet the minute we hit that beach you jumped right into the ocean after a man!"

"Here kitty, kitty, kitty!" I says, proceeding calmly about the business of disrobing.

"I'm no more catty than *you* are!" says Hazel peevishly, "Speaking of mushrooms, what's that big blonde's racket?"

"He's a reporter" I told her, "And he's taking me out to dinner tomorrow night."

"A reporter, eh?" sneers Hazel, "What's he going to use for money?"

Honestly, I'm more sorry for Hazel than angry with her. Poor dear, she means well, but she just doesn't know! You see, the only kind of drawing rooms Hazel's ever been in were artists' studios, when she was once a model young lady—or a young lady model, I should say. However, she was pleasant enough to Tommy when he began haunting our apartment to call on me. She tried neither competition or sarcasm.

Mr. Thomas Brown swiftly became a daily obstruction at my switchboard in the St. Moe, to the great disgust and alarm of Jerry Murphy and Pete Kift.

"Who is 'at big egg which aces around here all the time?" growls Jerry one day, glaring at Tommy's disappearing back.

"That's as much of your business as Coolidge's diary is!" I says.

"Don't get sore" says Jerry, "I'm only lookin' out for your best interests, Cutey. What's he want?"

"We haven't taken that up yet" I snapped, "So long, Jerry—I'll see you in the comic supplement, Sunday!"

"Well, if 'at John gets giddy, tip me off" says Jerry, ignoring the compliment, "I'll smack him for a loop! How come these gils can get your kind attention day in and day out and you won't give *me* a tumble?"

"I'm no good at riddles, Jerry," I says, carelessly.

"I wish you'd come up to my flat with me sometime and meet my sister" says Jerry, wistfully, "She's first-class company and so am I and we'd have lots of giggles. Speakin' of entertainment, I got Siam on my radio last night and——"

"And you got soup on your tie this morning!" I finished for him, "You better change that neckwear before the manager pegs you, or he'll about broadcast you out of here!"

That sent him scurrying.



Well, the *Evening Wow* was still on the market and as the proprietors were swinging the axe daily so the overhead would look attractive to prospective purchasers, Tommy Brown's job dangled by the thinnest of threads. The boy's earnestness and ambition had made a big hit with me—I wanted to see him smash over a fast one, really I did! So I made up my mind I'd furnish him with a scoop of the century for his paper, by ferreting out one if possible—if not, by creating a nation-wide sensation myself!

I commandeered Hazel, Jerry and Pete to assist me and although none of 'em went wild with eagerness at first, they all finally and as usual succumbed to my blandishments. I'm merely using that last word to show you I speak English, too. Each of my little playmates figured in some spectacular incident worthy of front page display in any man's newspaper and the details and photographs were given to Thomas Brown exclusively, by yours in the faith.

For example, I had Pete organize all the bellhops in the city into a union and then call a strike that tied up all the hotels. Believe me, those inns were fit to be tied when the boys walked out, don't think they weren't! Well, from this little incident, Tommy Brown got a colorful bed-time story for the *Evening Wow* of the guests carrying their own baggage, ice water, etc. and so forth. Jerry Murphy came nobly to bat next by

pinching forty-three sightseers in the St. Moe lobby in an enthusiastic drive against mashers. Hazel's effort was to be found bound and gagged in our flat by a couple of obliging coppers, ex-colleagues of Jerry's. Naturally, Hazel's twenty-five thousand-dollar diamond key ring was missing and of course the foul deed was did by a "mysterious masked man". Hazel photographs like a billion and Tommy's paper ate this hokum up hungrily. Really, he looked like a cinch for a lengthy stay on the *Evening Wow*. In fact, he boasted that one morning when he reported for the day's chores, the city editor actually nodded to him!

However, about the only successes in New York who can rest on their laurels and still rate attention from the populace are those who have been done in bronze and placed at park entrances and city squares. This was brought home hard to Thomas when the "beats" I furnished him had their brief flicker and died out. To have seriously upset Broadway's cynical calm, Columbus would have had to discover a new continent daily, perhaps two on Sundays. So one fatal day Tommy's city editor told him cold turkey that in two weeks Tom might be president of Porto Rico, Duke of Nebraska or head of the Steel Trust, but what he *won't* be is on the payroll of the *Evening Wow*!

Honestly, this unpleasant news disturbed me greatly and while I was cudgelling my brain for some scheme

to make the unfortunate youth a permanent attraction in Park Row, the way was clearly shown to me at my switchboard through a conversation I happened to eavesdrop over the wires.

Amongst the more or less guests at the St. Moe was John Temple Manning, also a newspaper man like Tommy Brown, only different. The difference between 'em was about ten million dollars. Manning owned the *Morning Malaprop* and a face containing two more wrinkles than there is in any prune that's come to my notice, really. As this greedy-eyed old fool never passed the switchboard without trying to arrange things with me, I liked him the same way I like appendicitis! I understood from Tommy that I shared this distaste for Monsieur Manning with the owners of the *Evening Wow*, which enterprising paper allowed no day to pass without lambasting him to a fare-thee-well. Manning, who's own news columns knew no brother, had recently printed in the *Morning Malaprop* a sensational story about a bosom friend of the *Evening Wow's* proprietors, hence the bad feeling.

One day Tommy Brown breezed into the St. Moe with an excited sparkle in his eye. He waited until I'd dealt out a bevy of numbers to the customers and then he leaned over close to me.

"What d'ye know about John T. Manning, Gladys?" he asks me, mysteriously.

"Nothing good!" I answered, promptly and truthfully.

"Ever hear of Jackson Young?" says Tommy.

"What am I being examined for?" I ask him, curiously, "Do you mean Jackson Young, the big oil man?"

"Absolutely!" says Tommy, "Big oil man is right! That baby's got an income of about half a million a year——"

"Not counting tips" I butt in, impatiently, "Get to the point, Tommy, I've got a lot of hot wires this morning!"

"Well, listen heavy, then!" says Tommy, with serious features, "I've got the chance of a lifetime staring me right in the face! The story of the year is in my hands—if *you'll* throw in with me. There's a rumor floating around the *Evening Wow* office that John T. Manning is paying a little more than courteous attention to a relative of Jackson Young's by marriage—to put it plainly, his wife!"

"Torrid Rover!" I says, "A fool and his honey are soon parted, eh? But where do *I* come in on that newsy tidbit?"

"Gladys" says Thomas, "My paper would give its linotypes for *proof* that Manning and Young's wife are in love with each other but as no proofs are available, we can't print a hint about the impending scandal through fear of the great god Libel. However, Man-

ning lives at this hotel—he *must* make and receive telephone calls—eh—maybe you——”

“That’s enough” I cut him off, “Let me think!”

I knew, of course, what Tommy was driving at and there were certain—er—ethics to be considered, if you know what I mean. I’ve never done anything yet that smacks of sneakiness and I wasn’t crazy about beginning then, Tommy or no Tommy! Still, this Manning was a married man and I thought him an unspeakable cur who should at least get slapped in the face for contemplating bounding off with another man’s wife. He was as popular as a blizzard with *me*—why show *him* any favors? The more I thought it over the more I devoutly wished to see Manning punished and made to like it! In the well known and popular jiffy I decided to be the Miss Fix-It through which Manning would be foiled in trying to break up his own and another’s home and Thomas Brown made eternally famous as a star reporter!

If Hades is paved with good intentions, then I’d be a knockout down there as a contractor, no kidding!

About ten days later I held Mr. Manning’s fate in the hollow of what has been called my lily white hand. Jerry Murphy and his copper pals had shadowed Manning day and night, Pete Kift got chummy with the millionaire rotter’s scofflaw chauffeur and under my

careful directions, Peter also engineered a little entertainment at which the talkative maid of the faithless Mrs. Jackson Young was the guest of honor. As for myself—well, the lady and gentleman were a bit reckless over the phone about their illegal affair of the heart. I had a cinch, really. All I had to do, was listen!

When matters were all set, I phoned Tommy Brown to simply hurl himself up to the St. Moe and gave him a slight inkling of why speed was necessary. Honestly, he arrived as if he'd been shot from a cannon!

"Well, what d'ye know?" he asks, breathlessly.

"A library full!" I whispered, "Manning and Jackson Young's wife are going to elope!"

"Leaping Tuna!" pants Thomas, "How did you \_\_\_\_\_"

"Shut up!" I hissed, "Time fugits! Manning's yacht is laid up and they're sailing for South America today on one of the little known steamship lines—Jerry Murphy will go with you and show you the pier. They're booked as 'Mr. and Mrs. Shields'. Now grab a taxi and do your worst!"

"I took a chance and brought a staff photographer along like you told me to" says Tommy, fairly foaming at the mouth with delight, "But I didn't tip them a thing at the office—I want to knock 'em dead with amazement. Creeping Mackerel! This will goal 'em!

Hating Manning's ears, my paper will pounce on this story of stories like puss pounces on little mousie. They'll smear it all over the sheet. I'll scoop the world and whoever *does* buy the *Evening Wow* will give me a life job at some delirious salary! I——”

“Get in motion, will you?” I almost screamed, “They'll be off Sandy Hook before you——”

But Thomas had shot through the lobby and out the revolving doors, scattering innocent bystanders hither and yon in his mad flight.

There isn't much more to tell, but what there *is* will ruin you! Accompanied by his photographer, Tommy boarded the lugger on which John Temple Manning and Mrs. Jackson Young were starting their unlawful voyage. Tom spotted the pair hiding back of a life-boat and his camera man used his police lines badge to set up his camera on the ship's bridge, getting a peach of a picture showing Manning with his arm around Mrs. Young's slender waist. Tom's next imitation was to get a copy of the ship's register and scramble ashore, all without the guilty couple's knowledge. Our heroic reporter made no attempt to interview his victims, being more or less sensibly afraid that Manning would have him shanghaied or something to prevent the publication of that photo and story.

Once on dry land, Tommy rushed to the office of the *Evening Wow* and feverishly typed out his yarn for

his overjoyed city editor, just like they do in a book. Within the hour, newsboys were shouting the extras that trumpeted Manning's disgrace to an eager city. So far—perfect!

Still flushed with the lavish praise of his boss and the congratulations of an envious staff, Thomas came right back to me to try and express his heartfelt gratitude. He tossed an extra, hot off the press, in front of me.

"We've simply flayed Manning alive, Gladys!" he laughs, a bit hysterically, "I've stood this town on its head! The *Evening Wow* was to change hands today, but that makes no difference to me *now*. I'm sitting pretty! My city editor says that if the new owners keep him on I'll get boosted to seventy-five per and be turned loose on nothing but big stuff. Why, I've already been assigned to cover that million-dollar Maiden Lane robbery and——"

"Wait—here's a call for you!" I interrupted.

"Probably my city editor," says Tommy, loftily, "I left word where I'd be. Something *big* must have broken, if he wants *me*!"

And he dashed smilingly into the booth I waved him to. Oh, Thomas Brown was a big fellow, right then!

I guess it was ten minutes later when Thomas Brown of the *Evening Wow* staggered out of that phone



booth. Honestly, his appearance almost stopped my wildly palpitating heart! His hair was all mussed up, his eyes bulged from his head and his face was the color of skimmed milk in a dairy where they make an art of skimming. He couldn't talk—he just panted and gulped at me!

“What on earth's the matter?” I gasped, “What's happened to you?”

“I—I've just been talking to a representative of the *Evening Wow's* new owners,” he breathes, “It's—it was about that Manning story. . . .”

“Didn't they like it?” I asked, astounded.

Tommy gives me a ghastly grin.

“No, Gladys” he says, “They didn't like it!”

“Why the idea!” I says, angrily, “After all the trouble we went to—can you imagine that? I should think that no matter *how* conservative the new owners of the *Evening Wow* are, they should realize that it's those kind of stories that sell papers. You told me your city editor said that himself!”

“Listen!” says Thomas, leaning heavily on the switchboard, “You're a great kid—a wonderful girl and I like you. I hope we'll meet again sometime. Just now the panic is on! I've got to get out of this man's burg a little bit faster than swiftly. *The Evening Wow* was sold to John Temple Manning, just two hours before it got out that extra telling the world its

*owner was eloping with another man's wife!* My, God, just think—the only newspaper in town that printed it was the one he had just bought. That noise you hear is the laughter of the gods. Goodbye!”

## CHAPTER XII

### JULIUS SEES HER

ONE evening, a few weeks after the rise and fall of Thomas Brown I was gaily handing out wrong numbers, "don't answer" and "busy" signals, when a swell looking, snappy dressed young fellow of about twenty-five autumns bounds up to the board and asks for Whitehall 1483. When I get them, he says he would like to speak to Miss Fish.

"Be yourself, Harold!" I says, giving him a glance which would freeze two Eskimos, "Whitehall 1483 is the Aquarium. You want to speak to Miss Fish, eh? How do you get that way?"

Honestly, his kid face grew as red as a throwing tomato and his Alice-blue eyes took on the hurt look of a baby's when you refuse it a lollypop.

"Why—why—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I didn't mean to be silly. I guess I've been kidded, *myself!* You see, I met a young lady last night and she gave me that as her name and phone number."

I could see from his face that he's telling the truth and I don't know why I feel sorry for him or sore that he should of met any young lady at all!

"Well, she gave you a pushing around," I says pleasantly. "Hereafter when you go out without your guardian don't pick up with every stranger that offers you candy—hundreds of children get kidnapped that way in New York every day."

He grins and pulls a blush on a complexion that I could do no more than tie myself.

"I don't blame you for laughing at me," he says. "But I *would* like to speak to that young lady because \_\_\_\_\_"

"Well, give me a good description of her," I butt in, "and I'll try and *guess* her phone number for you."

This time he laughs outright. Some giggle he's got, too—makes you warm right up to him whether you want to or not, if you know what I mean.

"Listen," he says, bending over real confidential, "I don't suppose you ever go out to dinner, do you?"

"Listen yourself!" I says. "You may be a fast worker, but mere speed will get you nothing here! I am no Miss Fish from the Aquarium! I never under no circumstances go out to dinner with male kiddies which I have just met. So run along back to school, I'm fearful busy. See you all of a sudden!"

With that I turn back to the switchboard and begin

doing my stuff with Mr. Bell's clever little invention. But the handsome city chap is no quitter.

"I won't bother you now if you're busy," he says, as serious as the Johnstown Flood. "But I'm coming back again with that dinner invitation, don't think I won't. I don't know how you feel about *me*, but I don't mind telling you that you've just about ruined *my* peace of mind!"

Cute, wasn't he? But of course I can't let *him* see it.

"You better get somebody to write you a new act," I says. "That stuff used to make Eve yawn! And now I don't wish to be rude, but—here comes the house detective."

"May I give you a ring tomorrow?" he asks, moving toward the door.

"This is *so* sudden," I smile. "And I don't even know you!"

"I mean a ring on the phone," he says, featuring that killing blush again.

"Go ahead, call up," I says. "I like a laugh as well as anyone."

I thought that was the end of him and I can't say that thought particularly tickled me. There was something about this boy that—that—well, *you* know what I mean! Most of these boobs are as standard types as nail files. Close your eyes and it could be any one

of a thousand of 'em trying to kid you—their approach doesn't vary two words. But this one gave me a mild thrill and even a *mild* thrill is interesting on a job as dreary as a hotel switchboard.

Well, to make a short story long, he phoned me every morning for the next week and made personal appearances every afternoon till Jerry Murphy had him pegged for a pickpocket and would have collared him on his third appearance if I hadn't interfered. I won't get near as many flowers when I'm dead and gone as I did the following week from the mysterious stranger and candy flowed like water. He also gave me a book of near poetry called "The Ruby Yacht of Omar Kyam" which I thought is a lot of apple sauce, but I tell him it's elegant as from the binding it must of cost plenty pennies.

Invitations to shows, auto rides, lunches, dinners, cabarets, ball games and requests to go to about everything else but murder trials were fairly showered on me by this dizzy youth and from the program he offered I could of gone out with him every day for the next ten years and never visited the same place twice! Still, I continue to plead a headache, as I am commencing to like this young daredevil and stalling is one way to keep their interest at fever heat. Then he made all his other moves look reasonable in comparison by moving right into the Hotel St. Moe.

With a room in the inn at which I am one of the features he was hard to laugh off, and finally one day I give up the one-sided battle and go to dinner with him. That's the start of the big romance and likewise the beginning of the young man's rise to fame and fortune. Funny, isn't it, how women can make fools out of men and men out of fools?

After a week of bounding around with him I begin to feel lost without him. He was *different* and no mistake! His name in even figures was Julius De Haven and I learned about Cupid from him!

Well, naturally in talking over this and that the subject of what Julius does for his coffee and cakes is bound to come up sooner or later. It came up sooner and Julius breaks down and confesses to being an actor. Now up to then I'd been actor-proof, but somehow the thought of Julius being one kind of interests me strangely. With that handsome face of his, those thrilling eyes, that soothing voice, wavy hair and moving picture manner, why, I think the least he can be is a leading man. Probably another Jack Barrymore. So when he asks me to come and see his show, "The Girl from Betelgeuse," it's almost more than I can do to wait.

But it's a couple of more weeks before I can arrange my hours at the Hotel St. Moe switchboard to get off and catch Julius De Haven's frolic, which by

the way is one of the biggest musical comedy wows on Main Street, having entertained Broadway for better than a year. However, the big night finally arrives and I simply grab some Java and a club sandwich and rush home from the hotel, spending two hours in dolling up so's when my musical comedy star meets me after his labors that night he won't be ashamed of his girl friend. I haven't got a wardrobe like Peggy Joyce, but what little I *have* got is bonded stuff and when I'm set for the drama that night I figure I could go anywhere with Julius and not be a handicap to him, even if his friends was all from Wall Street.

The seat Julius stakes me to is so close to the stage that had it been a few inches farther towards the footlights I would have been given a horn or something like the rest of the orchestra. I'm so excited I don't know if I'm in New York or New Zealand and no wonder—I'm about to see my hero do his stuff! I flutter open that program like it was "The Sheik" and I'm reading it for the first time—I want to see Julius's name there and what he does and everything. But lo and behold as the Peruvians says, there is not the slightest mention of Julius in the "Cast of Characters!" I think there must be some serious mistake and I go over that program till I could stand up and repeat it backwards at the drop of a hat.



Finally something catches my feverish eye that nearly sends me rolling off my seat out into the aisle in a faint! It was this in the back of the program: "Gentlemen Of The Chorus: Julius De Haven, Georgie ——" But what difference does the names of the rest of them male chorus girls make? My Julius a *chorus man!* If that isn't the shark's elbow! You could of knocked me over with an aigrette and I must of made a couple of remarks to myself a little too loud, because out of the corner of my eyes I see the customers on each side of me gazing at me in alarm. But the curtain goes up just then and prevents me from being an opposition show myself.

I just sit there and cover my burning face with my hands. I don't wish to see that show or anything else and least of all do I crave to see Julius De Haven. Honestly I could have got a summons for what I am thinking about my boy friend right then! I have tossed away my heart to a thirty-dollar-a-week chorus man, can you imagine that? And since I been on this job I've turned down whole coveys of millionaires—at least they said they was!

Well, you know they say curiosity is a girl and I guess that's a fact because in a few minutes I simply got to look up and see what Julius is doing, although to me it's going to be like watching your grandfather hung or something, honestly it is! So I peep through

my fingers and my Gawd there he is prancing around with a lot of other young men which will never strike Dempsey and they're singing some rough longshoreman's chantey all about "Sweet June has arrived with all her graces!" Now I ask you, isn't that a swell way for a great, big husky man to cheat the almshouse? I just keep ducking my head so Julius won't see me, because if he'd ever waved to me I know I'd have died of shame right there in that theater!

Well, first I am going to rush right out and go home, but then I think it will be better to wait for Julius so's I can tell him just what I think of him for trying to make me love him when he's got a job like that. I not only want to warn him away from my switchboard, I want to warn him away from my life! So I sit through "The Girl from Betelgeuse," but, believe me, I couldn't tell you what it was all about if it was against the law not to know. All I can see or hear or think about is Julius De Haven!

He meets me in the lobby after the show and when I see him in citizen's clothes again and gaze on his thrilling features I nearly weaken and maybe I might of weakened, only he hums a couple of notes from one of the songs he sings in the chorus and that makes me merciless.

"Well, sweetness," he says, with that ruinous smile of his, "how did you like the show?"

The idea that he's trying to brazen things out gets me red-headed!

"I should think you'd be too ashamed to even speak to me!" I says, and every word is packed in ice. "Listen—I'm going to leave you flat right here in this lobby and I never wish to see you again! If you follow me out of here I'll call a cop and if you ever come near my switchboard I'll have the house detective step on your neck. I'm *through* with you! If it gives you any satisfaction, I'll admit you fooled me up till to-night, but it's different now. I'm claiming exemption. Good by and good luck!"

He gets first red and then white and then versa vice. His big blue eyes look at me as hurt and surprised as if I had slapped him in the face. Honest, I must admit I get a pain in my heart as I watch him. I like this big kid, there's no use saying I don't, and it murders me to think he should turn out to be a false alarm after all the hopes I had for—for both of us. Why, I can't *understand* him being a chorus man! He don't look like one, or act like one, or anything, if you know what I mean.

"Good heavens, Gladys, what have I done?" he gasps finally.

"Not a thing," I says coldly. "You're just a total loss, that's all! What do you mean by trying to promote yourself with me when you're a *chorus man*?"

There's about three million girls in this town, why pick on me?"

He studies me for a minute without saying a word and then that hurt look slowly leaves his eyes—for which I am thankful, as it's commencing to hurt *me* too. When he speaks again, his face is hard as the side of Pike's Peak.

"I see," he says slowly. "All women are alike. No sportsmanship, no sense of fair play! I am condemned utterly without a chance to speak a word in my defence. But what interests me more is how a woman with your knowledge of life and the world can be so narrow as to think all chorus men, or let us say, a man temporarily in the chorus, can be degraded by the mere position, as you intimate."

"I don't wish to argue with you," I says. "I merely wish to leave you. Good night!"

With that I turned on my heel—and nearly turned on my ankle, as Julius grabs my arm in a very manly grasp. Afterwards it was black and blue.

"For God's sake, Gladys, don't send me away!" he says, in a voice which sends a thrill all through me. "You represent perhaps the only sincere emotion I ever had in my life and if *you* go whatever chance I have of getting anywhere will go with you. I *will* be a total loss, as you've just called me. With you, I can make good. Maybe that's a confession of weakness

that a real man would scorn to make, but it's also a statement of fact! Give me a chance to explain things to you—even a murderer gets a trial. You—you once said you loved me!"

"And I once did," I says, looking away. "But those days are over, Julius.

"Good heavens!" he busts out. "Can you switch love off and on as you would an electric light?"

I look at him and I'm lost.

"Go on, do your stuff and I'll listen," I says. "But don't let that give you the idea that you're twisting me around your finger!"

"The ideas I have about you, my dear, will never make you angry," he says, squeezing my arm. "Let's go some place where we can talk."

So we go to the Café Bordeaux where we can not only talk but eat, drink and be merry, as the saying is, and once we get a ringside table for the revue, Julius speaks his piece. It seems that after Julius gets sick and tired of Harvard he has his voice educated at home and abroad, being pointed by his parents for grand opera. He's also a bit fluent at acting. But breaking into grand opera is about as easy as breaking into the vaults of the mint, so while waiting for an opening in the Metropolitan, Julius decides he'll get a job as star in a musical comedy. He figures that once Broadway hears him sing all by himself, why, they'll just go crazy

and roll off their seats and the noise will be heard by the opera directors and from then on \$3,000 a night will be his minimum wage. However, eight months making the rounds along Broadway winds up Julius's bankroll and his parents' patience. The only way Julius can be starred is if he puts up the jack himself. That's asking the impossible, so he dives head first into the chorus of "The Girl from Betelgeuse," thinking his big chance will probably come sooner or later and he might as well be eating while waiting for it.

Well, they hear his voice while he's rehearsing with his frolic and they realize it's far from a jackal's wail, so they make him understudy to Charlemagne Rutledge, the leading man. This drives Julius wild with joy and why wouldn't it? Should any safes fall on the head of this big blah with the name like an apartment house and a collar, Julius will step into the leading part and knock Broadway silly. For one solid year he's been understudying Charlemagne and he's letter perfect in the part and musical numbers. Likewise, Julius is satisfied he's a better actor and a better tenor than Mister Leading Man. If he ever gets a chance to sink his teeth into this part just once—that's all he wants, just *once*—Julius swears he'll be the talk of New York. But Charlemagne Rutledge hasn't missed a single performance in the year the show has been

on the Big Street, and as it closes in ten days, why, it looks like Julius is another one of these roses which is born to blush unseen.

That's Julius—and I can take him or leave him.

I took him!

We go back on a pre-war basis after that night and I find I just can't get that boy's plight out of my mind. I want to help him—in fact, I'm *determined* to help him—but the thing is, *how?* Then the next day out of the usual clear sky I get the big idea that put Julius over and came near putting *me* in jail!

Hemingway Bryce, a five-minute egg, shared a suite on the tenth floor of the St. Moe with no less than Charlemagne Rutledge, my Julius's jinx. This Bryce is starring in "Coffee for Two" at the Rainier and he's just about pestered the life out of me trying to date me up ever since he parked himself at the hotel. I like him and poison the same way, and for all he knows the only English I speak is the adjective "No!" However, he's an actor and as this is a problem touching on the show business, I think maybe if I tell him about it, without using any names, he may make the one bright remark of his life and in that way I'll get the answer to the puzzle. So this day when he comes over to stall around I tossed him a bright smile. That nearly knocked his hat off and the way he floundered over to my side was comical to see!

"Well, girlie," he gushes—the big clown!—"when are we going to have that dinner together?"

I felt like saying, "When Niagara Falls starts running the other way!" But I want to straighten out Julius, so I throw the smile into high.

"I'll let you know later," I says. "I want to ask you something first."

"Anything!" he says, with his hand on his heart. He's one of these fellows which simply can't stop acting, on and off. "Anything I possess is yours, if——"

"What could be sweeter than that?" I cut him off, still smiling. "But I just want to ask you a question. What would *you* do if you were an understudy and knew you were greater than the star, but couldn't get a chance to play the part and dumbfound the world?"

He looks a bit surprised and then he pretends to be giving the matter the same attention the U. S. Supreme Court gives a trust tangle, standing there with his chin in his hand and a frown puckering his noble forehead.

"Why," he says finally, "why, *I'd* have the star kidnapped for one performance and take my chances!"

And he laughs. A little bit later he was like the laughing hyena which died. He didn't have nothing to laugh it!

Well, I manage to get rid of Hemingway Bryce a few minutes afterwards and I can hardly keep from



yelling with joy, because I've got Julius all set. I know just what I'm going to do and just what *he's* going to do—that's if he wants to keep his little girl friend. So when we go to dinner that night I put all my cards on the table, face up.

"Julius," I says, "after some years of watching you boys perform and in that way getting a good line on the male sex, I made up my mind if I ever fell I'd fall for a great man. Being a shipping clerk's darling or a head bookkeeper's bride never has appealed to me and it don't now! The man I gamble my future with has got to *mean* something. He's got to either get his name in the electric lights or invent something brighter!"

Julius is looking at me like a drowning man would look at you if you turned a hose on him.

"But I thought we settled all——" he begins.

"Don't interrupt teacher!" I shut him off. "As I was saying before you spoke out of turn, I always craved the affection of a really great man and swore I'd fall for no other. Unfortunately, Julius, *you* came along and you're far from great, but I fell for you nevertheless. There's no question about that part of it. Therefore I am going to *make* you famous, whether you want to be famous or not!"

"I'm afraid I don't understand," says Julius—and looks it.

"You want a chance to play the star part in 'The Girl from Betelgeuse' and show Broadway what you can do, don't you?" I says.

"Do I?" says Julius, grabbing my hands while his face lights up like a cathedral. "Why, say, sweetheart, if I ever get a crack at that part——"

"Well, don't cry," I butt in. "You're going to get a crack at it tomorrow night!"

"What do you mean?" gasps Julius, trying to read my face. He can't and he sinks back in his chair. "Don't jest about that, Gladys, it's too near my heart," he says, kind of reproachful.

"If you think I'm kidding, you're crazy!" I smiles. "If Charlemagne Rutledge fails to appear tomorrow night you go on and play the lead, don't you?"

"Of course," says Julius. "But that's nonsense. He hasn't missed a performance since the infernal show opened a year ago."

"Well, he'll miss tomorrow night," I says, still smiling, "because we're going to kidnap him."

Julius laughs and pats my hand.

"You angel," he says, "I really believe you *would* do that for me! But——"

"But nothing," I interrupted, the smile gone. "Kidnapping the leading man is the only way you'll ever get your chance. Well, we're going to do it. If you don't go through with this, *I'm* through with *you!*"

This time he must of read my face correctly.

"Good heavens, you can't be serious!" he exclaims. "Why the thing's unthinkable! I—why——"

"I never was more serious in my life," I shut him off. "I've even laid out the details. Keep quiet a minute and I'll tell you how we'll work it."

"Why—why—Gladys—I—we'll be arrested! We ——" Julius is at the stuttering stage, as pale as a couple of ghosts.

"Suppose we *do* get arrested," I says. "Look what we're shooting at! If my scheme goes through you'll be a star, won't you?"

"But—but——" He's all but speechless.

"Listen," I says, "cut out the buts. *I'll* be the goat in this little trifling matter and if you don't do *your* part you're canceled with me as sure as there's a Frenchman in Paris! Of course, if you're afraid you'll fall down if you *do* get the chance to play the lead, why——"

"Fall down?" he butts in, banging the table with his fist. "Why, it will put me over!"

"Then let's go!" I says, banging the table myself. "It's all fun!"

When we part Julius weighs about ten pounds less than he did when we come in the restaurant, but he's agreed to my little kidnapping scheme. About all he touched of the dinner was the check.

The next night I get busy on my own little movie, written and produced by myself and called "The Kidnapped Leading Man." I know I'm never going to get away with this without *something* happening that won't do me a bit of good, but had I knew just exactly *what* was going to happen I almost think I would of allowed Julius to make good in his own way. Before things was over I felt like I had called for a drink of water and got hit by a tidal wave!

My first imitation was to interview Pete Kift. I simply asked Peter to lock Charlemagne Rutledge in his room that night, so that by no chance can Charlemagne get out till it's too late for him to get to the theater where "The Girl from Betelgeuse" is playing. The fire escape is two doors farther down the hall, as both Charlemagne and Hemingway Bryce, who rooms with him, had kicked against having a suite that opened out into one, claiming it poisoned the view from the windows. So if Charlemagne wants to jump, good for him—it's only ten stories to the pavement and that last story would have a most unhappy ending, now wouldn't it? I then arrange at the switchboard that no calls from that suite are to be answered. That prevents my captive from calling the desk or anybody else which might be weak-kneed enough to release him and deprive my Julius of his chance to play the lead in "The Girl from Betelgeuse." I know I am crazy

to do this, as the fellow remarked before slapping the lion in the face, but then you want to remember I am also in love!

At eight o'clock Pete Kift sidles up to the switch-board as mysterious as a Cuckoo Klan meeting. He looks to the right and left and then he bends over to me.

"All set, Cutey!" he says, in a hoarse whisper.

"You're sure he's locked tight—he can't get out?" I whispered back, and gee, I'm nervous!

"Say," says my noble Pete, "'at bozo couldn't get out of 'at room if his name was Houdini!"

So that was all settled.

Well, I'll never forget the night I put in at that board if I live to the ripe old age of a million. Phew! I got nothing to do but think of what will happen to me when Charlemagne Rutledge gets out of that room and realizes he has missed his show. I think and think and think and then every time I get about froze stiff with pure fright, why, the thought comes to me that Julius is out on that stage singing and acting his way to a roaring success. That thought kind of evens matters, for it fills me with a warm glow of pride and satisfaction. Anybody which got a right number from me that night got it by dumb luck and nothing else!

As the witching hour of midnight approaches and I

am thanking Heaven that I'm about to go off duty, Pete Kift again slinks up to the board and this time he's got the word "panic" wrote all over his face. He's as nervous as a frightened rabbit and a bit pale and sickly looking. What a swell villain *he'd* be, I think, but then it's the men who always weaken, isn't it?

"Cutey," whispers Pete, "I have got to let 'at baby out of his cell upstairs, I do for a fact. He's bellerin' and meowin' and kickin' on the door and he's went to work and busted a window on me! He's jazed around up there so much he's got the people in the adjoinin' rooms all stirred up. All the neighbors' children and the like is outside lookin' up at the windows, and you know what 'at will lead to. I'd like to go up and cuff some brains into him, but I got to let him out, kid, or the reserves'll be here!"

Well, I'm ready to faint because the grand finale is about to break, but tell Pete to go up and unlock the door. It's twelve o'clock now and by this time Julius must be the talk of Broadway. That being the case, I'm ready to take my medicine, because naturally enough I can't let poor Pete Kift be the goat for a frame-up I planned myself. Anyways, Pete springs for the elevator and is shot up to the tenth floor like a bullet. I'm pinning on my hat when the same elevator door opens and out of it almost falls—not Charlemagne Rutledge, leading man in "The Girl from

Betelgeuse," but *Hemingway Bryce*, his roommate and star in another play!

Heavens above, I have kidnapped the wrong leading man, ruined a perfectly good show and in no way helped my Julius to fame and fortune!

All this comes to me like a blow between the eyes with a mallet and I sink back against the switchboard just about ready for the undertaker. Hemingway Bryce comes rushing up to murder somebody for not answering his wild calls and one look at me seems to be enough for him.

"By the eternal!" he roars. "I see it all now! You asked me what *I* would do to give an understudy a chance to play the star's part. Oh, fool that I was! The irony of it. I told you I'd kidnap the leading man, little thinking *I* was that leading man myself! So you and my understudy did this damnable thing, did you? Well——"

"Mr. Bryce—please!" I butt in faintly. "Please listen. You *must* listen! It has all been a terrible mistake. I—we—I didn't mean to kidnap *you* at all. It was——"

"Not a word!" howls this dumbbell, prancing around. "I'll have you arrested! I'll sue this hotel for a million dollars damages and I'll collect, too! My reputation is gone forever. Boy, call an officer!"

At this critical minute the revolving doors revolve

and in rushes the cause of it all—Mr. Julius De Haven. He pushes the foaming Bryce aside and bounces over to me like there's nobody in the hotel, or in New York for that matter, but me and him.

"Oh, you wonderful girl!" he hollers. "I owe everything to *you!* Your blessed scheme succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. I played Prince Danilo in 'The Girl from Betelgeuse' tonight as he has never been played before. Why, sweetness, I got an ovation! I was forced to take a dozen curtain calls after my first act alone and—oh, it's too much to tell you all at once! Seligman came to my dressing room and offered me a starring contract for next season and—why, darling, what's the matter?"

The matter was that I had simply passed out! Things were coming entirely too fast for little Giadys. Here I have living raving evidence before me that I have kidnapped the wrong man, yet Julius says the scheme went through! Then who in—eh—then who in the name of Kansas City kidnapped the *right* leading man?

I come to with Julius fanning me and trying to force me to drink water. I will not be forced to drink water, so I straighten up in time to see Charlemagne Rutledge burst into the crowd around me and throw his arms about his dear old roommate, Hemingway Bryce.

"Thank God you are safe!" bawls Charlemagne.



"Safe?" yells Hemingway. "I'm *ruined!* This woman had me locked in my room tonight and I missed my performance!"

"Then she has saved your life!" says Charlemagne Rutledge. "Haven't you heard! They're crying the extras now. The roof of your theater collapsed, man, and hundreds were killed! The streets were closed by the police for blocks around. I couldn't get through their infernal fire lines until eleven o'clock and I missed my *own* performance. I don't know how my under-study got through with the part and——"

"Ha, ha!" butts in Julius joyfully. "You'll know when you see the morning papers old dear!"

Hemingway Bryce has turned triple pale when he hears of his narrow escape. He's worse shook up than *I* am and that's a fact!

"I—I—forgive me," he stammers to me. "I—I owe you my life. I could kiss you!"

"Try it!" says Julius, the ex-gentle chorus man, "and I'll murder you!" And he slides his arm around me.

But, honestly, I had nothing to do with the roof of that theater falling in. *That* was somebody else's idea, no fooling!

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