





AIN'T ANGIE AWFUL!

GELETT BURGESS



COME WITH HIM? YOU COULDN'T HAVE MELTED
HER OFF WITH AN ACETYLENE BLAST

Ain't Angie Awful!

Being a Story of the Adventures, Blunders, Captures, Distresses, Engagements, Flirtations, Gallantries, Hatreds, Ideals, Joys, Kisses, Loves, Marriages, Near-Marriages, Obsessions, Passions, Quests, Romances, Sweethearts, Trials, Utterances, Vexations, Woes, Xasperations and Zeal, of one Angela Bish

By GELETT BURGESS

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Goops, the Burgess Nonsense Book, The Rubaiyat of Omar Cayenne, The Maxims of Methuselah, The Maxims of Noah, Are You a Bromide? &c., &c.

Illustrated by Rea Irvin



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE ADVENTURE OF THE SIX-CENT STORE	15
II. THE ADVENTURE OF THE PEANIVOROUS RIT	28
III. THE ADVENTURE OF THE FASCINATING FACE	38
IV. THE ADVENTURE OF THE MAD PAPER-HANGER	46
V. THE ADVENTURE OF THE PINK PANTALOONS	55
VI. THE ADVENTURE OF THE GRAFOLION COMPANY	65
VII. THE ADVENTURE OF THE BILLION-DOLLAR BILL	75
VIII. THE ADVENTURE OF THE DUMB DECEIVER	85
IX. THE ADVENTURE OF THE MOZAMBIQUE MONKEYS	95
X. THE ADVENTURE OF THE TEMPORARY HUSBAND	107

ILLUSTRATIONS

Come with Him? You Couldn't Have Melted Her Off with an Acetylene Blast	<i>Frontispiece</i>
She Gave Him a Little Two-For-Five Smile	22
“Why Hast Thou Brought Me Here?” . . .	24
He Flung Wide the Portal	26
The Plumber, Who Cut Off Her Ears with His Tin Shears, Hardly Knew Her . . .	36
That Embrace Was a Revelation of Rap- ture to Angie, Who Still Had an Am- ateur Rating	47
A Leprous Bungalow, They Found	49
From a Roll of Green Cartridge Paper She Fashioned the Simple Robe in which She Fledded	53
Like a Fireman Feeding a Furnace His Knife Went Up and Down	69
It Was an Uneasy, Seasick Feeling That There Was Somebody Under the Bed . . .	86
Hardly a Proper Costume in which to Re- ceive Gentlemen at 7 A.M.	88
Finding That She Could Ride the Harp Safely He Set Her Right to Work	98
“Somebody's Daughter Perhaps,” They Said, “Who Knows”	101

AIN'T ANGIE AWFUL!

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CHAPTER I.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE SIX-CENT STORE

IN the good old days when girls wore ears and lacquered their faces only in the privacy of their own homes, Angela Bish held the proud position of 23rd assistant gum-chewer in a six-cent store. Also, between times, she sold hardware very hard—such as cast-iron screwdrivers, tin saws, imitation hammers, and gimlets that wouldn't gim.

All day long behind the counter she stood on one leg or the other, and sometimes on all of them; and the longer she stood, the less she could stand it.

Black was Angela's hair, and her black eyes were black. Now some, says Confucius, are born with black eyes, and some acquire black eyes; but Angela's ebon orbs were a

birthday present from her dear, dead, fat father. Angela's dress was equally black, if not blacker; her finger-nails were all pronounced brunettes. But, in those days, all her thoughts were blonde.

Angela thought, for instance, that if a man kissed her it would within four minutes be followed by a perfervid proposal of marriage. At this time Angie's mind was not very strong. She was only thirteen years old, going on sixteen, and never yet had that funny face been kissed by mankind. Men had grabbed at her, of course, and even pecked at her lips; but no one yet had landed a base hit. Always she had struck them out.

Here's a little pathetic bit about Angie, now we're on the subject. Timidly, in private, oftentimes she would take down a photograph of Fairas Dougblanks, and lick it lovingly. Did he respond? Nay, he did but laugh at her—that same old lithographic grin. How cruel life can be, at times, to the working girl!

Don't you already feel, dear reader, that you know Angela Bish? Can't you almost see her lack of any real womanliness? If not, begin the tale again, and this time

please pay more attention. You may have missed that part about her crass brass bangles, her semi-diamond rings, and that hungry-sad Childs' Restaurant expression of hers. Did I tell you that her ears were pointed? Well, they were not.

No one, in those dank days, had ever called Angie a Vimp. But that wasn't her fault. Already she had got one job as a movie actress, but she was discharged because she hated having her photograph taken. Even as you and I she said she'd rather go to a dentist. Angie, in fact, didn't know what a Vimp might be. Neither do I. But I think Angie wasn't one of them; and I'm quite positive she wasn't two. We both feel, don't we, that she was far, far too young.

A straight orphan was Angela Bish, yet the neighbors said she was always 'round. All that she remembered of her father was that, while he was only a few weeks old, he had died while trying, with considerable success, to boil his own head, believing it to be a turnip—a red turnip, which, in fact, it almost was by the time it was rescued from the soup kettle. The Bishes could eat no chowder that day.

Her mother—everyone right here will kindly shed a tear—was a woman. Only a woman, that is all, and yet it is through such noble creatures that life and love are possible. Let us pray. . . . From this disagreeable old half-washed harridan Angie inherited her sex which was, at least, so far, female, and a wild old goldfish who looked like William Jennings Bryan in a globular glass globe.

But hurry, reader, hurry; don't stop to ask why! We must get us back to the shop to see our lovely heroine hard at work, the arctic zone of that hairy head wondering how to kindle the ardent temperament of her customers.

And especially she marked with indelible attention the pretty plaid Mister with purple spots and a beautiful half-burnt cigar who stood breathing puffs of peppermint into her fascinated face. How eagerly, when he picked up a hammer, she wondered how that would strike him! And when he turned with a sneer to the chisels and scissors she was in agony lest he should cut her dead. But six-cent cutlery is dull—as dull as our own (surely we may now call her so)

Angela Bish. The can-openers would have done far better to give her an opening.

Her hero only bought a paper of one-ounce tacks to put in his friend's dog food, and passed out of Angie's young life.

No, at this epoch, Angela knew as little of flirting as did the Swami Vivekananda, or Carrie Chapman Catt. For in those dull pre-tango days ladies wore low-necked gowns only in the evening; and, save for mere feet, they had no visible means of support. Men, to virtuous Angela, were just a queer kind of women who wore pants and mustaches and hard hats, who smoked cigars, and, if they saw fit, married one. And yet Angie, pure as was her heart, longed wildly to be wild. Every girl does; in fact, if not in fancy. That's why they are called girls.

We now come to the morning of Angela's first adventure. Early was she awakened and cheerily by eight pounds of plaster falling from the ceiling upon her face, neck and suburbs. As usual, the vaudeville team in the room above were practising the shimmy dance and massaging each other with their feet. It always bored Angie, this time more

than usual. She yawned, rose and went to work combing the lime powder from her ears and nostrils.

“Oh, I’m going to have good luck today!” she exclaimed, as the toothbrush went through the locks of her glossy hair. Poor child! She had found only seven cockroaches in the water pitcher. It takes so little to make a young girl happy!

An aged egg she fried in a sardine tin, over a candle, now, and washed it down with a baked ham and the northeastern half of an English plum pudding with champagne sauce, left over from her frugal little dinner of the night before. For her dessert—only the candle-end; and you know yourself how tasteless candles are, without sugar. Next, after oiling herself all over with butter, she wriggled into her blue sausage skirt, and put on her hat. It looked like a cuspidor, but it wasn’t. Angela never wore them.

Then it was that her great moment came. For years and years she had tried every morning, before the mirror, and every time she had failed. Today something seemed to snap in her—it must have been her conscience strings—and without the slightest

effort she discovered that she could say it.

“Damn!”

Sobbing, half with regret, Angela knew that her childhood was over. She was free, free!—free to break hearts and pocketbooks, free to wear long red earrings forever and forever—perhaps afterwards; who knows! In the ecstasy of ewomancipation she drank half a bottle of cologne and smoked two whole Chinese punk sticks. She was free, *free!*

Joyously she set out for the six-cent store, on the corner of 13th and 25th Streets, West.

Who would have suspected that, diagonally above that little tum, there beat a heart filled with naughty joy? Back of those black eyes were thinks that would have made Rabelais weep. Yes, such was Angie that morning, if not sucher.

And behold, at 11.11, again He appeared where the hard hardware counter concealed the southern half of our little friend A. Bish. Her hero! The same plaid suit with the same dear spots, the same half-smoked cigar, the same sweet old breath, embalmed in peppermint, as per always.



SHE GAVE HIM A LITTLE TWO-FOR-FIVE SMILE

Over the top she cast her eyes. He caught them.

“I say, girlie, how much are these?”

“Can’t you read? Everything on this counter is six cents.”

“What, *everything*?”

“Yes, everything!” How simple are the truly great dramatic moments of life.

A red light flared in his eyes. “Then I’ll take *you*!”

For a moment, perhaps for only a jiffy, Angie swooned. Love’s hour had struck ONE! Then, ringing up his six cents, she gave a last look about at these to-be-forgot-

ten scenes of her infancy, and calmly wrapped herself up in brown paper.

“Here you are,” she said, firmly knotting the string about her waist. What she meant was, “Here I am!” But he understood. At such moments there is little need for words. One’s instinct speaks.

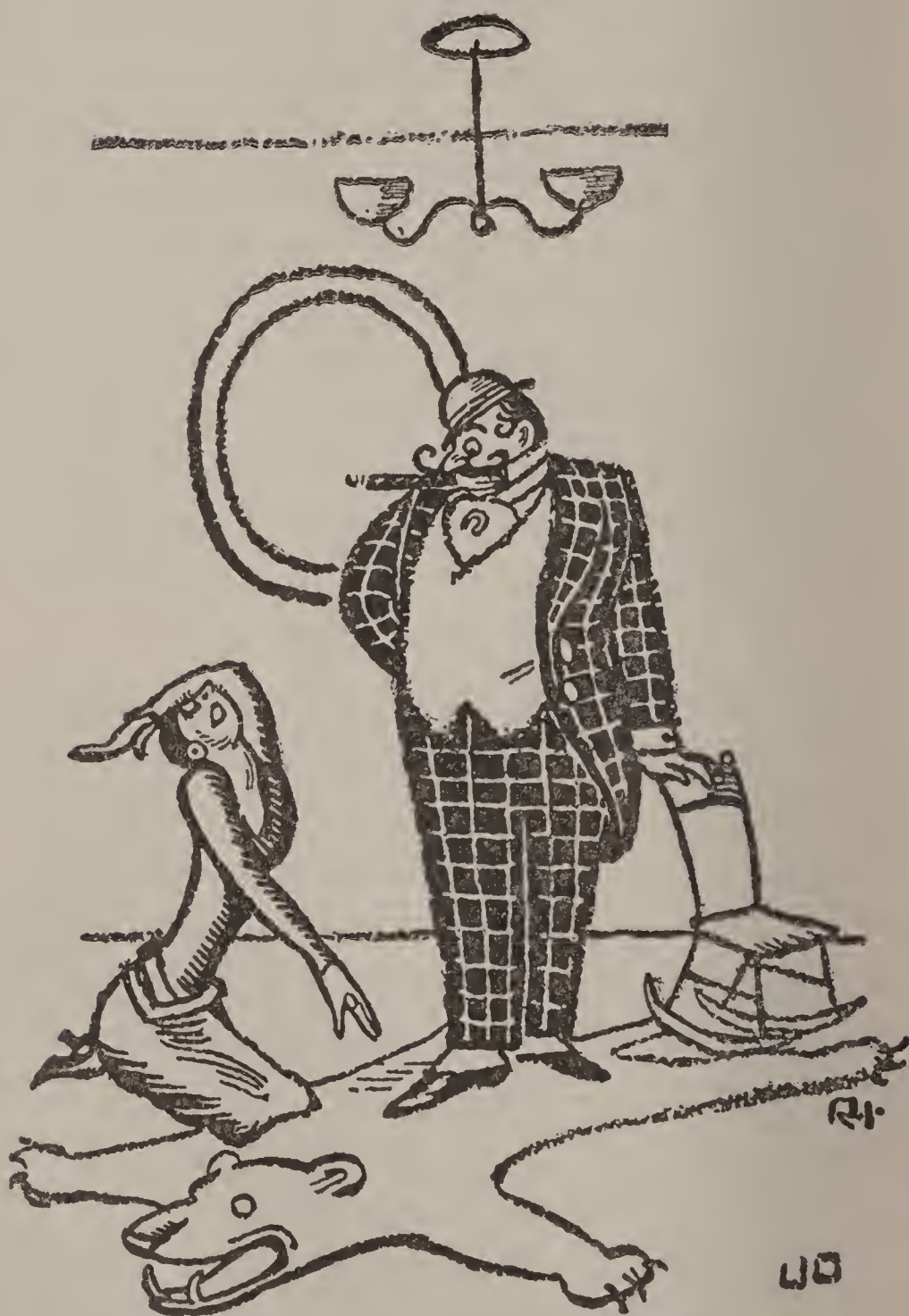
In another minute he was outside the store, and Angie, trembling like a kangaroo with the flu, felt herself being carried down, down, down into the Subway. Then all was dark, dark!

* * * * *

Three hours later, in a gorglorious apartment on the 101st floor of the Asdorf Walthoria, Angela regained consciousness, although her brain still reeled with the stupefying fumes of peppermint and romance. Her hero was gloating over his happy victim. Strewn about the room she counted several thousand cigar butts.

“Who are you?” she murmured loudly, “and why hast you took me here?”

“I am a manufacturer of tobacco ashes,” was his reply, “and I need somebody to sift them and pack them into silver cans.”



“WHY HAST THOU BROUGHT ME HERE?”

But life, dear reader, is not always one unbroken rosary of rapture. Not at all, or seldom. Some pearls are tears. Wherefore Angela's virtue was to remain to bore her for many, many years. Hardly had she begun rapturously to fear the worst, when came a loud rap at the door. Her hero turned pale, but, hastily and yet resolutely donning a pair of purple suspenders, he flung wide the portal.

Alas, there stood there, there did, with evil in his eyes, Mr. Burleson T. Woodrow, the proprietor of the six-cent store.

With evil in his eyes he cried the one word, "Give her back, you robber! Give her back!"

And, so saying this, he held before the Hero's horrified gaze a small lead token. A little thing it was, small and round, hardly littler than a glass eye; but it had power to change Angela's destiny. With one long, swift glance, she saw that her doom was sealed. Back she must go, back to the slavery of the hard, hard, hardware counter again. In one moment all her innocent dreams of vice had gefled.

"Oh, dammit!" she whispered.



HE FLUNG WIDE THE PORTAL

How little we know when a new accomplishment may prove useful!

For B. T. Woodrow held, in that large lobster-like hand, a counterfeit six-cent piece!

CHAPTER II.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE PEANIVOROUS RIT

ANGELA was now only sixteen. But what does that matter, when one is young! She held a responsible position in a Swedish match factory. She it was who, when the matches were all finished, dipped the tips in water to make sure they would not light.

Would I might describe her sloe-black, fast-black hair, her high-brow eyebrows, her nice cool high-school eyes whose pupils were always playing truant whenever she winked. But I see you are not listening. You want me to resume the offensive, with a capital offense.

Well then, although Angie was as happy as a fried egg, her friend Conscience had begun to tell her, "You're another!"

For the Soul, beloved brethren, hath also its traffic cops, warning us at all life's cross-roads, "GO" or "STOP." But somehow, whenever Angie's conscience showed green she was apt to see red.

“Fat gentlemen with side whiskers,” it was now whispering, “who present young girls with popcorn and peanuts on the Elevated trains are nice, but naughty.” But, though he had his neck shaved, he was wealthy, and could evidently afford it. If, then, he choose to drop buttered popcorn



and peanuts down the back of her neck, why shouldn't she accept the gifts in the spirit in which they were given? For they were given in the very highest of spirits.

Angela's view of life, you see, was a little

cross-eyed. She should, of course, have kicked him gently in the face and then called upon the handiest marine hard by to finish him up and spit him out the window. If she couldn't find a marine—and sometimes one can't, although they are the first to fight—she might, at the nearest jewelers, at least have got an aquamarine.

But instead, she gave him a little two-for-five smile (you should have seen one of her large 85c ones, when she was lapping up a cucumber sundae!) and coyly mentioned her telephone number. It wasn't hers, really, though; it belonged to the undertaker on the ground floor—and that was a funny thing, too, for Angie had often said she wouldn't be found dead in his shop.

One day the undertaker who was always undertaking people, undertook to call her down to the phone. Angie always hated to be called down, but condescending she descended. It was her fat friend; she knew it was, because she could smell peanuts in the receiver.

“Say, meet me at the Ritz, will you, Peacho? Right away!”

Angela frowned. But it wasn't that, upon

such short acquaintance, he called her by her botanical name. It wasn't that something seemed to be stirring and moaning inside the coffin on which she sat. It wasn't even that the undertaker was listening, as usual, for he wasn't; he was drinking as usual—embalming fluid. No—"the Ritz"—it was something that often happened when she tried to think—a sudden rush of mud to the head.

"But what are rits?" she faltered. "Is it a breakfast food, or something like a Yonker?"

"Oh, take a taxi, and ask the engineer. Hurry!" and he had hung up before she could say Jack Dempsey. She hadn't time even to think of saying it. It didn't occur to her till hours afterwards.

She didn't take a taxi, but a taxi took her to the hotel whose bills towered high over the adjacent roofs. There she paid the chauffeur—'twas all she had—a compliment. The poor girl could ill afford it, seriously ill; she had now but two left, and no more coming in till Saturday!

But she was going to meet a man! This time love's guerdon would be hers! Angie

thought a guerdon was some kind of a locket or lavalliere, perhaps even with diamond chips in it!

* * * * *

We now come to the party of the second part—a rather entertaining Friday Night party, from 8 till 10.

He was large and blond; rather blond than large, though he was large, too—too large. Tanned by the fierce tropical rays of the electric light, his honest, leather-beaten features and even portions of his face and visage showed him to be a strap-hanger of more than usual vigor—one who could step on a dozen feet at once, not including his own.

In full view of the audience, he was eating eight peanuts, with nothing up his sleeves and a silk hat. As he ate, he breathed; and as he breathed, he ate. Long practise had enabled him to do both at once. But he couldn't do both and be surprised at the same time. He had to stop something, so he stopped breathing—for lo, Angela was before him, the love light in her ears.

“Here I be!” she cried. It was a grammatic moment.

He gave her one look. But then, he was always giving her things. He had been generous from the first. Not content with that, he gave her a cuff on the jaw. It was one of his best cuffs, too.

“You are late, girl! Come up to my room on the fourth story, the only story, unfortunately, with a happy ending. It is in the East wing, near the wishbone. Follow me!”

Did it bode murder, or marriage? Angie hardly cared. All she knew was that she was beautiful and desperate and slightly bow-legged; and heaven helping her, she would make this man her slave. If heaven wouldn't help her, it would be hell.

How they ever got up to the room she never knew—so why should I—or you? Perhaps they crawled up the mail chute. Perhaps they were carried up on a tray, disguised as two near-gin rickeys and a liverwurst sandwich. But they are in the room already and we'll have to hurry to catch up to them.

At last she was alone with him and two dozen mouse-traps. They were all arranged upon the bed, all different nationalities, though most of them were females. Why

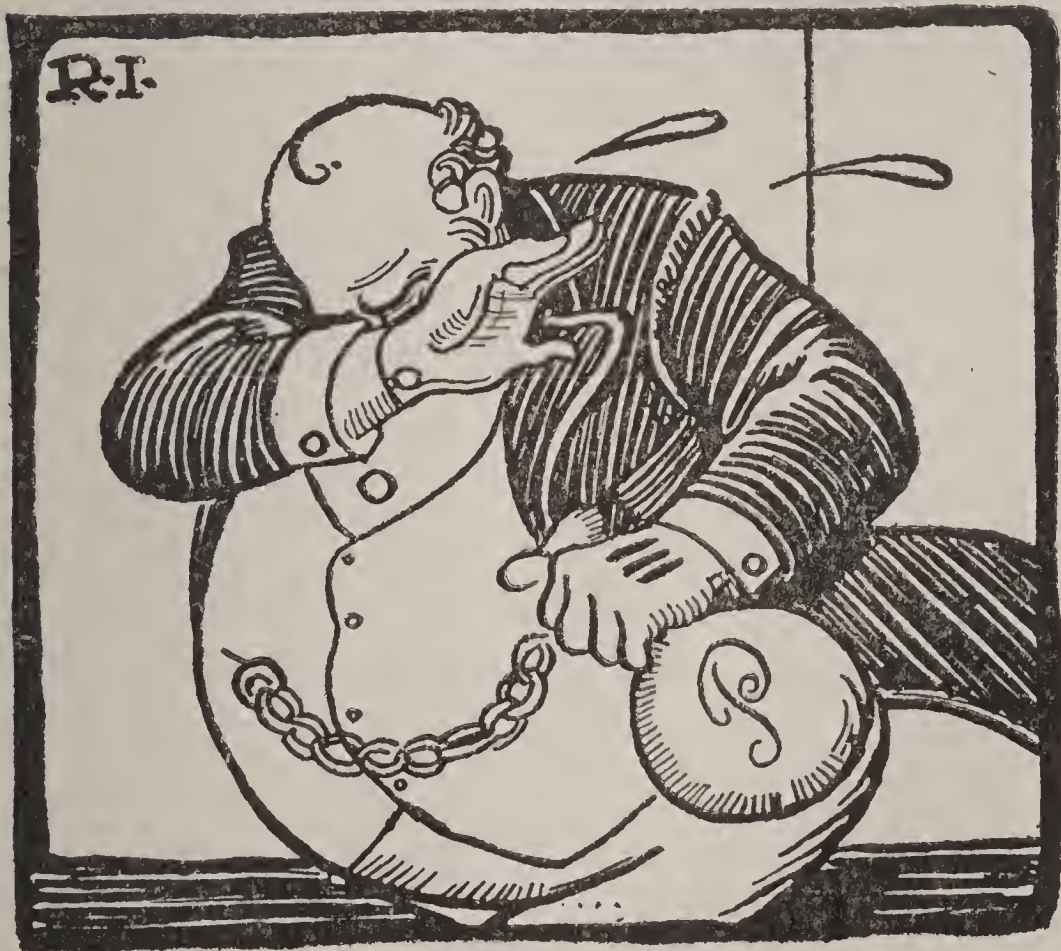
had he set a trap for her in this lonely place? As both her hands were in her muff she could not shut her eyes and thus conceal her blushes.

“Now here is my best seller,” he went on as if nothing had happened, which, in fact, it had. He displayed a small silver contraption looking like the skull of a rheostat. “This is devised for the use of ladies who are afraid of mice. Just attach it to the garter, and it catches them on the way up, thus rendering it unnecessary to mount a chair or other quadruped. You, my dear, are to peddle them; you will have all rights north of Fifth Avenue. You have brains and temperament and freckles, and should do well. I have picked you out of the whole of New York, but I shall return you. Now here is another, a trap with a chain to be fastened to the wall, grand piano or anything heavy, like a mortgage, or afternoon caller. You see, little one? The mouse, when caught, can neither pull the trap into his hole, nor the hole into his trap. You will work on a commission, say a captain’s, or, if you do well, a major’s.”

But Angela Bish had a soul above mouse-

traps. She would catch larger game; and the wealthy peanut-eater, whose victims strewed the floor, not to speak of shuddering peanuts yet to be eaten, pale with fear, had the makings of a he-husband. Her chance had come.

With a scarlet cry she hurled herself into his arms, and, by the hard-boiled kiss she gave him he perceived, too late, that she was virtuous. Amazed, shocked, he wrenched



himself free and burst out of the room, weeping like a cow.

And alas, Angie, in her excitement—she had hardly known what excitement before—had sprung the trap, and behold, she now found herself firmly held by the left ear at the end of a long silver chain. Struggle as she might or might not, she could not escape. She couldn't even get away. The room was filled with wails and peanuts. No one came.



THE PLUMBER, WHO CUT OFF HER EARS WITH HIS TIN SHEARS, HARDLY KNEW HER

To drown her sorrow she began eating the peanuts feverishly.

* * * * *

It was hours before they found her. She had aged terribly. The plumber, who cut off her ear with his tin shears, hardly knew her. But then, he had never seen her before, and we must forgive him; besides, peanuts change one considerably, especially when eaten without a spoon.

CHAPTER III.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE FASCINATING FACE

IT was Spring in New York. Don't you just love stories that begin that way—or do you prefer Autumn? It was spring in New York, nevertheless. It was Spring, also, on Avenue B. Indeed it often is, at that time of year. Bright red flannels were burgeoning on the clothes lines, and on the fire-escapes the milk bottles lent their vivid note of blue. Aye, it was Spring for kiddies and frisky puppy dogs; but it was Spring no more for the late Tom-cat in the area. Alas, he had not yet been removed by the Board of Health!

What was Angela Bish thinking of as she gazed so perpendicularly out the casement? Was it of love or lobsters, of lingerie, or Charlie Chaplin? No. There was only one thing Angie ever thought much about—nothing. She was thinking about it now. She had been thinking about it so long that her wrist was asleep.

Angie was quite a young lady, now. She

was a quarter to eighteen. Her feet by this time were fully grown, and in other ways she was getting a figure. Occasionally for a whole minute at a time her mouth was not ajar. Beautiful? Well, hardly that. Angie looked too much as if she had been packed all the winter in a trunk, with camphor balls to keep the moths out of her circulation. Still, if anyone liked that sort of girl, Angie was just about the sort of girl one would simply hate.

The trouble was that nobody seemed to like that sort of girl. They wanted one with fewer elbows, and more eyelashes—one who didn't boil over with frenzied yearning whenever a man passed her way. No one had ever made love to Angie, no one had ever even proposed. Angie always managed to propose first. No, Angie had never been hugged; she showed it plainly in every gesture. Yet she had the temperament of a mustard plaster. You see, if any man had ever hugged Angie, he would be hugging her yet. She would never have let go. But instead, he is hugging some other girl, less Angelic, someone with removable fins.

All these things had made Angie a

woman-hater. But what true womanly woman is not?

Angie had had no breakfast that morning, Angie had not had, and she was feeling a little tropical in the inskirts of her equator. Late the evening before she had found, outside the inside of Delmonico's, lo, a bill-of-fare, thrown out the window, probably, by some bill-collector. Hungry and worried, she had devoured the whole *menu* from the date to the final period. . . . It must have been the *Chignons sous cloche* that had disagreed with her. Undoubtedly the dinner card had not been quite fresh.

So Angie had to walk down town on an empty stomach. If it had been anyone's else stomach it wouldn't have been so hard; but to have to walk on her own—without rubbers—was very rough on a proud, sensitive girl, especially when slightly cross-eyed.

A demonstrator of mackintoshes was Angie. All day long she sat in a red one and a happy smile under a shower of real water in a shop window, regarding the passers-by. It was a bit damp, the mackintoshes not being really as waterproof as they

were advertised, but as Angie already had water on the knees she didn't mind it. She sat and just thought about zeros, and how soon she'd get married. How many, many husbands peered at her through the plate glass and longed for a wife as silent as Angie! But Angie never knew. If she had she would have burst a blood vessel.

For this work Angie received two dollars a week and all the water she wanted to drink, free. Seeing so many men, she was never lonely. The only thing she disliked about it was having to sleep on the radiator all night; but she simply had to get dry enough to go to work the next morning, and after all, her radiator was one of the softest in New York. Every situation, however, has its little drawbacks anyway; even a Bank President has to get used to the drafts.

Now among the faces that stared at Angie, wondering if indeed she were human, or only a gently smiling vegetable, was one so covered with whiskers that at first she could hardly tell whether it was a man or a woman. But oh, those eyes! Angie thought them capital I's. Gazing at them, she felt just as if she were going over Niagara Falls in

a barrel. Then she would wake up to find her mackintosh was leaking in a new place, and she was only half drowned, after all.

Now, to some, Love comes slowly, like a coat of tan growing ever deeper. But to others it strikes as suddenly as lightning, permeating one's whole being like a sneeze. To Angie love came not only quickly but always; and, if denied expression it soon developed into convulsions which often proved fatal.

The third time she saw The Face, Angie plunged through the plate glass window with a nice scream and threw herself into his arms. But, alas, he had already disappeared!

This depressed her; she felt like a chocolate éclair that has fallen into an ash barrel—that is, almost as bad—as bad as a vanilla éclair, at any rate. She would be revenged; she would find that Face and face it. Then she would woo him like a siren, only not quite so loud, and when at last he was acclimated to her vampire love she would sit on him hard. Perhaps, indeed, she might begin by sitting on him—it would depend upon what else he had on his lap. Any-

way, she would make him suffer even as she had suffered, even if she had to marry him to do it.

But where was the Face? That was the interrogation point!

For weeks she searched—but it was like trying to find a needle in a smokestack. There seemed to be so many, many whiskers in New York, but they never had that Certain Something that made her feel so all-overish. She was, therefore, in no very gilded frame of mind when, one evening, she sat down on a Fifth Avenue curbstone to rest. She simply had to get rested or arrested—she didn't care which.

For a while she was so amused watching the children and old gentlemen getting run over by automobiles that she didn't see the person seated beside her. Except for his eyebrows his face was quite nude. His hands also were naked, and he was thoughtfully eating unsalted five-dollar bills.

Such rich food might disagree with him, thought Angie; but she didn't really care. One gets so used to gluttony in a large city that one takes it quite easily. And strangely, too, she felt no vertigo such as usually

overcame her when she found herself in the same block with a live man. Her heart was broken. If only that Face were broken, instead!

And still he said no word; his face was too full of currency. It was not till he began speaking that he spoke.

“I am a stranger in Manhattan,” he remarked, “and this is the cheapest and best meal I have eaten here for several years. I was enjoying it in my simple Flushing fashion till you came. But you have taken away my appetite. If you don't return it, I'll call a policeman.”

No man had ever spoken to her so kindly, few had ever spoken at all. There was something, too, about the way he shoved her into the gutter that moved her strangely. But she was in no mood for flirtation, or, indeed, for anything mere. At another time she might have loved that man—in a gondola, perhaps, or an obbligato or an arpeggio, or, in fact, in any of those picturesque places you see in the movies. But it was not so to be. She heard only these cruel whiskers that had deceived her; she saw only that lying voice.

But already a policeman was approaching her on care-worn feet.

Blushing to the roots of her tonsils, Angie fled, she knew not where.

Hardly had she got there, however, when a sudden thought struck her like a falling safe. Wasn't there something strangely familiar about that man—or was there? The way he had aimed his nose at her—the way he had sighed through his ears—what *was* it? Or wasn't it? And if not, why not?

And then it all came over her and overcame her. . . . She stopped, looked, listened. But alas, two alases! He was gone. In acute despair she leaned sadly against a newspaper and began to weep—great, wonderful weeps.

He, who had seemed so *vice versâ*, was he not, indeed, by way of being The Face? She had, in fact, almost recognized it. Why why, now!

It was a close shave!

CHAPTER IV.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE MAD PAPER-HANGER

NOT long did Angela Bish remain in her mackintoshes. She had tasted Romance *à la* subway.

For two days, now, she had winked, in the 199th Street Station, at a melancholy man in a slimy overcoat whose beard was full of big white blobs. He had smiled at her, she fancied; although, between you and me and the chewing-gum distributing machine, the red paint of which was being hungrily licked off by a half-starved tot, it may have been that misery, alas, too often draws only a smile from the thoughtless.

Be that as it may, let us return to life as it is lived north of 11th Street.

Angie lived on the memory of that smile all day; and at night she warmed it over for supper. Already life had changed for Angie; and, inversely, Angie had changed for life.

The third day, greatly daring, she returned his grin in even better condition than she had found it.



THAT EMBRACE WAS A REVELATION OF RAPTURE
TO ANGIE, WHO STILL HAD AN AMATEUR RATING

Another instinct, and she was in his arms. Isn't human nature wonderful, Gertrude? At one moment you are in heaven waited on by pink angels, and the next, some one has tried to borrow four dollars—and succeeded. And then, when your spirits are covered with green mold and infested with crawling things, lo, a friend appears out of Nowhere and offers you a position as companion to a beautiful and wealthy young French girl at a salary of \$3,000 a month and cigarettes. Isn't that true? Anyway, I'll say so.

But I was speaking, you may remember, of our foolish heroine.

That embrace was a revelation of rapture to Angie, who still had an amateur rating. How beardy his beard was!—and his hands were soft and cold and moist. At first she thought they were raw oysters. She had always loved oysters, always would. She was happier than she had been since she ate her first hair sandwich. Nevertheless, we must not leave her too long in the embrace of an imperfect stranger.

“I have found you at last!” With difficulty the words came through the thick

brown beard. It was he who spoke. Angie had no beard. She was far too young.

“Just one moment to buy a toothbrush,” she replied, “and I shall be Yours Sincerely.” And Angela smiled.

Now there are smiles that make one, and there are smiles that make one blue. Her confession seemed to strike him funny, like a cranberry pie in the face.



A LEPROUS BUNGALOW, THEY FOUND

Indeed, all the way to Harlem he seemed depressed; but then, they were going to Harlem. Curiously enough the object of their journey is the subject of my next sentence.

A leprous bungalow, entirely surrounded by goats, they found, ramshackled to a

high cliff overlooking an ash barrel. There Angie was pushed through the front door, and behind her he slyly turned the key in the lock. She was, in fact, locked in, if you get what I mean. They were at last alone. . . .

Now many authors would make a good deal out of a compromising situation like that. But you scarcely need to know more; you also have a morbid imagination. Yes, as I have promised the editor to tell the whole truth, I shall not flinch from the facts. I shall tell you all—all. And I shall not even use asterisks.

* * * * *

He led her to the kitchen, and he led her to the stove. There, pointing to a huge bucket of paste, "Fry this!" he commanded. "'Tis too sour to stick to the walls, and, woman, I must be fed!"

Often, in future years, Angie was to remember those miserably happy meals, and how, afterwards, a mutual indigestion drew them together. When at last the bucket was empty they munched scraps of wall paper, and their faces began to break out in spots of mauve and yellow, not to speak of elsewhere. It was a great satisfaction, however,

to know that it was at least dining-room paper.

Yet even then Angie was not satisfied. And finally, in her despair, she cried, "At least you might wash your beard, O my love, and then when I kiss you perhaps I wouldn't be so stuck on you!"

The paper hanger was aqueduct to the occasion.

Maddened by the world-old cry, "*Do you love me? Don't you love me?*" he arose and pasted her over and over with layer upon layer of the most expensive wall papers. Then, when she was quite covered with the pink cretonne, he pasted her up in front of the back-parlor wall which was decorated with a similar pattern. There, thank God, she was for a while invisible, though still from her camouflage came weak, wan peeps of love.

That day Angela did the hardest work she had ever done. She thought. And when she had clawed herself loose, her mind was made up like an Upper 7. This time he should not escape her!

Hiding in the oven of the lofty range, where he had forced her to sleep o' nights,

she watched him enter and give a glad howl to find himself alone. Then, while he was absorbedly removing a wad of gum from his heel, behold, she sprang upon him, clasped him in a fond embrace—and clung.

Reader, bear in mind that I expressly reserve all emotion picture rights. The desperate girl had coated herself from hair to heel with paste! It was sour but sticky.

Alas, for him, there was now no getting away. Never had he found a woman so attractive, never one who could hold him so long. When he had tired of them, he had always cast them carelessly aside. But not so Angela Bish, the clinger. Proud as he was of his early struggles as a paper hanger, they were nothing to the writhings with which he now sought to regain his freedom.

It was useless, of course, to appeal to the Supreme Court for a separation. They were not yet married. But, as he fought, an idea, bright as the Star Spangled Banner, carried him and equally her (Oh, say can you see them, welded together like two bars of chocolate in the dawn's early light?) towards the bathroom!

Before she had time to regret having left



FROM A ROLL OF GREEN CARTRIDGE PAPER SHE
FASHIONED THE SIMPLE ROBE IN WHICH
SHE FLEDDED

the faucets running after washing her switch and wrist-watch, they had reached the tub, which, like her happy heart, was now full to overflowing. And there, with a sudden noble resolve, the paperhanger, who knew little of such things, had decided to take a bath. In they flopped as one, and rose to the surface twain.

And as he clumb the slippery-soapy porcelain marge, Angela Bish sank to the bottom for the third time, her hopes drowning with her.

How long she stayed there, she never knew nor cared. But when she had dried her eyes and hair, he had fled. Seldom did she see him more.

From a roll of green cartridge paper she fashioned the simple robe in which she fledded. And all the way home on that Lexington Avenue car she sadly asked herself, "Why? Why? *Why?*"

Even thoughtless strangers, usually, as you know, so unsympathetic, gazing at her ultra-modish garb, and the gobs of paste upon her neck and pallid eyebrows, they likewise asked themselves, each other, and the conductor, "*Why?*"

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE PINK PANTALOONS

O H, browf, but it is cold!" said Angie, "browf!—browf!"

And in simple veritudo the poor child was frizzified. She was all covered with geese flesh; but then, Angela Bish always was a goose. Anyone is who barks in her sleep.

Nineteen is a terrible age; and the longer you're nineteen the worse it is; neither girlitude nor yet womanability. Angie hated to think about it. To think about anything at all, in fact, was apt to produce vertigo. She had but one idea—it lived in her head alone, like a cow in a tree. Its name was Get Married.

For to Angie all men were holy. Some had money and some had mastoiditis, but she felt sure she could fit right into any man's arms and take root. The only trouble was she never had a chance. When men saw Angie coming towards them—always at a gallop—they usually jumped into a taxi

and gave the chauffeur ten dollars in advance.

Now Angie was, at this epoch (if it were an epoch, and not a mere spasm), a Collector of Burnt Matches for the Unsold Spaghetti Company. She got a dollar per 10,000—when she got it. But it is hard work collecting burnt matches in Winter, so hard that many have given it up in despair the very first year, and gone in for First Editions or Sheffield Plate, instead. It's especially hard when you haven't any friends except old ladies who don't smoke, and use only two or three matches a day, for lighting the gas stove.

Working from seven in the morning to a similar number p. m. she had, so far, amassed only a scant 5,000. Most of them, besides, were very short and dark complected and some had never been anything but Swedish matches at best. Not a noble hoard. But it was something. Almost anything is.

With this collection, she set out, one day for the Main Office. Boldly she approached the President, a man famous for his side whiskers, raised under glass.

“Well, have you 10,000 already?” he

asked without looking up from his Ouija board.

“Alas, no—only 5,000,” Angie was forced to confess.

A bobbed hair stenographer smiled. She was new at the business, so new that she wore no jewelry and went out to the Rest Room to powder her ears. She still thought spaghettis grew in the smaller Venetian canals, and the holes were made by toreadors. She gazed at Angie, with much of her face open. Too much.

“Nothing doing!” said the President. “And don’t come back till you have 10,000; and then don’t. I fear you are infectious. Kindly do not breathe until you have left town. Wink all you want, but don’t breathe.”

Very, very angry was Angie. She didn’t see red, for, among her other accomplishments she was color-blind; but she did bite a piece out of the door knob as she left. It failed, however, to appease her hunger. She was mad all the way home—so mad that the train conductor thought seriously of muzzling her, but didn’t, on account of the expense.

So now you know why Angela Bish, gazing so violently at the demised fireplace in her small apartment, this cold ten o'clock, felt so gizzardless and unfastened in the small of the back. The temperature was far below par, and already Angie's hair was frozen.

Only 5,000 in six weeks! Why, it would have been cheaper she thought to buy new matches and burn them herself! More fun, too; especially on a day like the aforesaid. And wouldn't they make just as good spaghetti as the real ones growing on the sidewalk and in the gutters? No one need ever know.

We have spoken of a fireplace, just as if Angie was really living. Pardon the prevarication. Angie's room rent had not been paid for some time—her landlady said even longer—and she was now dwelling in two pine packing cases in an alley behind a garage. As only simple portieres of gunny sack-ing protected her from the curiosity of the limousines which prowled about her domicile, she had to be very careful what she ate.

For many days she had been nourished on the paste she begged from benevolent bill-

posters, and occasional scrapings from 24-sheets of Theda Bara and other highly indigestible stars, and she was beginning to feel the need of simpler food less exciting to a person of her spontaneous temperament. Still, she was happy enough, except for the nail on the floor of the box very near where she was most fond of sitting down, and a knot hole which had established a direct communication between a February breeze and her left ear. As she did not entertain much company she could keep her feet usually in the dining room.

She had named her new abode "The Pines."

This rustic tranquillity was bifurcated, one tremendous afternoon, by the arrival of a pair of pompous pink pantaloons containing one "Mr. Frimp," a small, smiling object surmounted by a shock of longish black hair such as is often found on Chinese, and the tails of Percheron stallions.

"Surely," said Mr. Frimp, holding Angie off with one hand, "there is not another woman in the world with a face like that. Even one is improbable. Two were quite

impossible. Then you must be, indeed you are, aren't you, Miss Angela Bish?"

"I am," said Angie, as she wildly endeavored to suffocate him with her long overdue embraces. "But don't ask why. It's chronic, but I still hope to have my last name, at least, cured." Her hungry eyes burned like roasting chestnuts on an Italian's frying pan.

"One moment!" The stranger untied her arms from his neck. "What I have to say will probably cause acute convulsions, so I beg you to be calm. Are you married?"

Angie shrieked. "I would give 5,000—"

"Nor engaged?"

"So much indeed am I not so, sir, that it has already threatened to run into insanity, if not more so."

"Then I love you!"

Angela swooned. And in her ecstasy, it seemed to her that she was drowning in French ice cream covered with chocolate sauce in a new \$90 Paris hat. Such bliss sometimes kills; and Angie, her lungs full of vanilla and pistachio, was going down for the third time, when she was slowly but fiercely pinched back to life.

She was still embracing Mr. Frimp, but he was gradually removing her with a tire iron.

After tying her securely into her packing case, he nailed down the cover securely, called it a day, and left.

* * * * *

Now lightning may seldom strike twice in the same place, but workmen often do. And Mr. Frimp was working Angie to a finish. He struck hard next day. So hard that Angie was as tender as a rump steak after treatment with a mallet. But then Angie had always been soft. By this time she was practically liquid.

Came days of divine delight to Angela Bish, in a world of almost Coney Island beauty, with a man she could paw as much as she pleased. Came magic hours when for days her lips were not removed from his. Came Love, in all its transcontinental grandeur!

* * * * *

Day by day they wandered together along the curbstones of the great city, marveling at its beautiful cesspools—at the gorgeous gutters, where the banana peel grew so lux-

uriantly. Or, haply, they strolled towards the East Side and reveled in the fragrant Portuguese fauna of the slums.

At night, scaling some lofty fire escape, high amongst the milk bottles they would together marvel at some heart-broken geranium, alone in the February frosts, or smile at the frozen gold fish in a neglected bowl of ice.

It was cold, so cold that even Angie's kisses could not always warm them; but, as they sat hand-in-hand on some picturesque ash barrel their mutual shivers thrilled them to the epiglottis. At least they thrilled Angie's. Mr. Frimp's were hidden under that mop of Japanese black hair. And you never can tell what ears will do when you take your eyes off them.

And so love at last had come to Angela Bish—love such as poets sing—love such as you hear so much of from the hand-organs.

But, alas, in all the high-class love affairs there is always a Joker.

* * * * *

The marriage day had come, arriving promptly at 12.00, midnight.

Angie, cutting smart, diagonalized holes

à la Doughnut in the fetching white flour sack that was to be her wedding dress, opened her sleepified eyes to discover Mr. Frimp opening her packing case.

“Angela,” he remarked, “will your love be as subsequent as it is previous?”

Angie frothed at the mouth.

“I need a little cash tonight,” Mr. Frimp continued, “and all the banks have gone to bed. I cannot afford an automobile for our bridal trip, but I can get a really beautiful wheelbarrow cheap. Could you lend me a few thousand till tomorrow?”

A strange sound came from Angie’s ears. “Frimp,” she said, at last, “I have only seven and a half cents to my name. I earned it keeping out of sight of the garbage man. I always give him a pain, and tonight, having acute indigestion, he couldn’t risk seeing me. God knows I need the money for the little trifles women love to have on their wedding day, but—”

“You have no money?” gasped Mr. Frimp.

“Not many money—but they are yours!”

“But that five thousand you told the President of the Spaghetti of?”

“Five thousand? Ah, yes!” And Angie, opening a tin box she always wore about her neck, proudly displayed her precious hoard of burnt matches. “I thought, when we were married we might stuff a mattress with them—”

But already Mr. Frimp was transformed with rage and disappointedness. With one scornful gest he had torn off his pink pantaloons. Blush not, ladies, underneath was a purple accordion-plated skirt reaching far, far below the hips. Another wrench—like a monkey wrench it was—and his coat and vest came off, and Angie saw, rather than felt, an orange blouse. The silk hat bounced off his head; and from it, Mr. no longer, a female Frimp extracted a green picture hat and set it angrily athwart her head.

It was now the mercenary stenographer from the Spaghetti Company who was no longer there. She was borne away on a despairing sigh. And you would sigh, too, wouldn't you, if you had had to keep company with a whiting like Angie for a month, free, and pay your own expenses?

CHAPTER VI.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE GRAFOLION COMPANY

FOR a young girl, life in New York is hard; so hard as to be practically indigestible. There were times when Angela Bish didn't know where her next kiss would come from. Other girls fell in love, married, were beaten and divorced. But none of these blessings were vouchsafed Angela.

Indeed, she had so often been thrown down by men that, at the Almost-Fur factory, where she glued whiskers onto blotting paper, to make sealskin coats, they called her Angie the Unbreakable. Disappointed hopes had turned her hair prematurely yellow.

Ill as she could afford the luxury she would have given eight dollars any day for a husband, dead or alive. If wealthy, she would have preferred him dead. But all the matrimonial agencies had given her up as too wonderfully willing. Men, they said,

kindly, liked to pursue an elusive woman, like a cake of soap in a wet bathtub—even men did who hated baths. But poor Angie began to smile when a man was blocks away, and kept it up till the cops asked her if she were looking for the Home for the Feeble Minded.

Yet she was fair—at least, fairly fair. She would have made a good wife for any dead husband. Besides her talent for gum-chewing, for which she had received a gold medal at the Garbage Collectors' Annual Ball, she had incipient hydrophobia and many other accomplishments. But they accomplished little in the way of a husband.

The fact was, Angie was usually sound asleep in and around the region between the ears, and she woke up only when marriage was proposed, usually by herself. Brains she had nix. The only answer she knew was "Yes"; and that didn't get her very far with the tightwads she knew, unless they happened to ask her did she want a trolley ride.

Yet it is always darkest just before Christmas. Even as she pored over the first lesson in the Correspondence School of Sui-

cide, and had about decided to specialize in Rough on Rats, Romance was already sneaking into her hall bedroom, disguised in special delivery. The letter was unsigned, but she recognized the perfume as one on sale by all the best soapists.

“Oft,” it began—and she smiled. Angela liked soft letters, and one that began with “oft,” she knew, would be as gooey as the inside of a ripe Camembert cheese.

“Oft have I admired your smart closed carriage, your proud boardwalk, the graceful swinging of your gait. They have quite run away with my heart, although my liver and lungs still remain unmoved. If you care to share a little whale and buttermilk at Kid’s restaurant tonight with one who adores the very tacks you walk on, wire Ham-and-eggs, care United Stogie Store, No. 1112, Hoboken-on-the-Sewer. I thank you. Green Mustache.”

Hatched in the happiness of her soul, a baby hope, no bigger than a Boston baked bean, flapped its beak and cawed in ecstasy. That day for lunch Angela Bish ate a heavy dessert to keep her spirits down. But, all the afternoon, the girls at the Almost-Fur

factory, seeing her giggle over her glue, decided that she must have received the happy news of a death in the family.

She walked to the restaurant as if on hair.

And sure enough his mustache was green; and he must have been green himself to take Angie so seriously. Few would have taken her at all. He held out a hand like twenty cents' worth of bananas, and lifted his two-quart hat.

“Angela,” he said, “long as I have known you—and it is now almost a whole minute—never have I seen you more beautiful!”

The compliment instantly went to her head, and there, in the great dim solemn silent spaces, it roamed about like a tailless cat in a cathedral. And her smile was that of one who has just borrowed a \$400 squirrel coat to be photographed in. That is, if there are \$400 squirrels. I doubt it.

She couldn't eat. Indeed, long as she had practised the art, it was all she could do to do nothing. But he ate heartily and handily and greedily and gaudily in great glorious gosh-awful gobs. Like a fireman feeding a furnace, his knife went up and down.



LIKE A FIREMAN FEEDING A FURNACE HIS KNIFE
WENT UP AND DOWN

Was it time for the clinch yet? she wondered. No, there was still considerable pineapple pie on his mustache; and she decided to wait till he had finished his repast . . . at last it was all gone. Angie opened her eyes again.

“Now, little one,” said he, “come along with me. We are going to have one of those wonderjazz evenings you read about in the fifteen cent magazines.”

This was no news to little Angela, only, it wouldn't be like one of those short stories, she had decided; it would be a regular he-and-she serial, as illustrated by an artist with-three-names.

She took his arm, together with everything between his hat and heels, including the Flor de 14th St. cigar that was slowly turning his green mustache violet. Come with him? You couldn't have melted her off with an acetylene blast. She had grown on him like a wart or a bad habit, for richer, for poorer, for sale or for instance till death did them puncture.

* * * * *

The hall of the Grafolion Company was cold, so cold as to be well-nigh rectangular.

As he poked her through the transom Angie was saying to herself, "Once I get him in my arms, nothing shall ever part us except marriage!" With her personality and her biceps she felt sure that she could hold him and his cigar. Poor Angela! She was as optimistic as a centipede about to attempt to cross a freshly varnished floor.

And yet, once alone with him—for when they went in, his cigar went out—she found, somehow, she just couldn't do it. It was not her will that relented, she had made no will. It was nothing so petty as pity, nor was it the mole on the bow of his nose. No, it was only the long overdue fact that she was handcuffed to the wall, and, try as she might, with all her might, she could not pull it down. She could not even bend it. It was lucky for her that she was used to being a wallflower.

I wish I didn't have to describe the scene that followed. But your vulgar curiosity must be satisfied. Yet how shall I bring it home to you, if you insist upon having a ghastly thing like that in your own home? I can only say that, when that brute in human form approached her as if to kiss

and, my gawd! did *not* kiss, her bloodshot shrieks sounded as follows:

D! pdq *—&Dzp\$Bjz!!! AAR D!gdf*

One would have thought they were dismembering a Member of Congress. Her screams filled the hall to repletion.

And still the man she would vamp and could not, kept three-eighths of an inch from her, his green mustache brushing her nose. It was a ticklish situation for Angela. As near he was as rent day, yet far away as fairyland or the Differential Calculus. She never could tell them apart; few can.

But what, ladies and gentlemen, was the most mysterious machine just abaft her fore-quarter, whose wheel, the while, was revolving with the hellish cruelty of a taximeter taking a girl home to the Bronx? It turned on and on. . . . Once she had left the water turned on all day in the bathtub. This was like that—only the floor was not so wet. . . . And as it turned, by her mixed groans one might have suspected her to be a giraffe with a stiff neck.

But she was not. She was only a young girl growing bilious. And at last, answering her cries for help, the room rose on one

corner and bowed politely, then looped the loop and did a tailspin. Angela knew no more; indeed, not so much.

* * * * *

A spoonful of gasoline, forced between her lips, revived her; and she was released by a red-headed Chinaman. Him she might have kissed, perhaps, for Angela's love was usually all-embracing. But it was too late; her kisses had staled. The man with the green mustache had disappeared. At first she thought he had taken her heart with him, and felt anxiously inside her corset. No, it was not gone, but it was going.

* * * * *

Three weeks are supposed by some to have elapsed.

* * * * *

Entering a Hall of Records, one day, something—it may have been the Recorder—told her to ask for the new Catterwaulski records, so extensively advertised, of late, in all the best fly-papers. She heard, and, understanding, at last, thereby established a new record of her own for intelligence. Be-

fore her ears were reproduced the convulsive arpeggios of her late lamented anguish.

Yea, verily; in the distracted depths of Angela's lovesickness, the Grafolion Company had discovered a new coloratura contralto. You can get her complete conniption on a 12-inch disc for \$3.50.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BILLION DOLLAR BILL

ANGELA Bish was now twenty. Doesn't that make you homesick, girls? Never mind; try to be brave. Into all lives some rain must fall—some girls must be over thirty. Anyway, if you're not twenty your daughter may be.

Angie was already five feet long, including the two she had to start with, although it is true they had chilblains. Still, she was a pretty girl, if you didn't look very hard. Her eyes, though small, were plainly visible and her mouth was similar to those found on some of our best known eaters. Her in-growing chin, however, was sometimes mistaken for a lower lip.

“My one hope,” Angie's mother had said, as she lay drowning of acute perspiration, “is that you won't be like other girls. I want you to make something of yourself, Angie dear—something perfect!” And

Angie did. She made a perfect fool of herself. It was a sacred duty.

Yes, Angie was by this time so foolish that she had never even heard of face powder, and had a theory that every decorated woman she met worked in a flour mill. Yes, she thought that the tango was a tropical fruit, that jazz was a popular drink and that men, when alone, talked only of women. She believed everything she saw in the movies, except the Norwegian travel pictures. Nobody believes those, of course. In the upper apartments of Angie's head, in short, there was Nobody Home. Her brain was To Let. Inquire on the premises. But nobody did.

But to realize just how foolish Angie was one would have to be a boy octogenarian— young enough to understand, and yet old enough to believe it.

The fact is, Angie was neither girl nor woman. She wasn't even a stenographer. She was a sort of feminine Bevo, with a denatured disposition guaranteed not to intoxicate. The more you had of Angie, in fact, the soberer you got. Few men had ever acquired a appetite for her—it took

too long, and always left a yellowish feeling in the mouth, as of oakum, okra or mulligatawny.

And yet, poor thing, her craving for masculine attention amounted almost to erysipelas. At the faintest sign of approval Angie would pursue a man madly all the way across the Brooklyn Bridge, and then break into his house and demand of his wife that she sue him for a divorce.

“You have the children,” she would plead, “and you have had him for years. Don’t be so selfish—surely it is my turn, now!” Nothing could quell her determination but a dishpan full of red hot soap suds. For there was royal blood in Angie; her grandmother had been named Queenie.

Chilly it was in her bare bedroom, so childishly chilly that the poor girl had to eat the coal to keep her warm, even though it always gave her coal sores. She was so hungry that her feet ached. So, no wonder Angie was blue, dark blue! Also, she was getting that awful unkissed look that brings out one’s freckles so prominently. Her corsets, too, had been put on hind side before, that morning; and when a girl does that, Eddie, you

can always make up your mind that she has given up hope.

But we must cheer up and go on.

Old Gomorrah Bish, Angie's grandfather had just died. Some had believed that he would live forever; others thought he had already done so. Only once had he ever seen Angie; and then he was so spiffled that he had thought she was twins. So, in his delirium, he decided to leave her twice as much as he had previously planned. He had fully intended to leave her nothing.

But he was so busy dying every day from 8 a. m. till 5 p. m., with only a half an hour off for lunch, that he forgot to leave a will. So, as Gomorrah never had had any children of his own Angie, his only grandchild was his sole heir.

This very morning her legacy had been received by mail. It was a big bright billion dollar bill. How Shakespeare would have loved that phrase! But oh dear, he will never know.

Why, then, was Angie so unhappy? One doesn't get a billion dollars, you know, every day. Sometimes weeks go by before you get it; and even then you don't, do you? It

was so long, in fact, since poor Angie had seen a live billion dollar bill that she didn't recognize it. She thought it was a trading stamp of some kind—a green trading stamp perhaps; certainly not a yellow one. She knew that much, anyway. It was no more use to her than a stepped-on chocolate drop or a subway ticket to Mars. Her dream of affluence had grown quite bald; her hopes were falling out every day.

That's the way it goes in this world, especially with those whose brains have failed to coagulate. Listen: Opportunity knocks but once at every one's door, and then usually goes right on and delivers the package to the wrong address. One girl for instance, will be so interested in listening to the phonograph that she fails to hear a rich Patagonian asking her to marry him, while another, a mere elevator girl, perhaps with a brass tooth will ring up the President of the First National Bank and get him to propose over the phone, thereby winning \$10,000 a year alimony. But for further particulars see our small booklet. "Love Lures." \$1.50 post paid. Send no money.

And so Angie of the concave intellect,

needing a curl paper, twisted up her front fetlock in the billion dollar bill, and then forgot all about it. But her disappointitude she could not forget. She was sore about it—as sore as if she had fallen off the top of the Woolworth Building at dawn; or possibly a few hours later.

Only once that day did Angie smile. It was when, in the Subway, a large insurance man trod on her foot. But, on watching him anxiously-hopeful for the follow-up, she was forced to conclude that it had been a mere accident. He seemed to be doing it to everybody. Aren't men all polygamous?

The shock gave her a severe heartburn, and so she had to hold her foot in her lap all the way to Wall Street. From there to the Battery, however, the crowd thinned, and it wasn't so embarrassing; she was able to rest her shoe on the knees of a Belgian Quartermaster with three wound stripes.

* * * * *

That forenoon, in the Comfy Underwear Factory, as Angela sat sewing buttons on the horsehair shirts, the girls saw tears wriggling out of her eyes. But they knew Angie

was soft-hearted; she would weep even over her boiled eggs, when she found a poor little dead birdie inside. So they thought she had merely found another gray hair that day—possibly in her soup—and went right on chewing gum.

So fast came the tears that she could scarcely see, that afternoon, to fasten the wire netting in the seats of the celebrated Willwear Underwear. Ah, yes, there are often tragedies, dear reader, woven into the most inconspicuous portions of your geography. Little you know, when you sit down to your happy meal—but let that pass! It is too horrible. One sees so many tragedies in the movies what's the good of having them in real life!

* * * * *

As the chickens were coming home to roost on Broadway, that evening, Angie was standing disconsolately on the corner of Madison Square voraciously eating the steam from a roasted peanut machine—it was all she could afford for dinner. As she waited idly, wondering why blondes *would* wear red hats, a beautiful whiskery gentle-

man gravely approached her from the opposite direction to that in which she was eating. As he raised his silk hat, he was gnawing his mustache, and his sad smile smelt of licorice.

“Lady,” said he, “if indeed you are one, pardon me; but you look so much like that small, elongated musteloid carnivore known as the *Putorius vulgaris* that from across the street I thought you were a weasel; or peradventure you are only Welsh. Would you kindly give me your name?”

He put on his hat, ate a few more mustache, and bowed politely.

Angie not only gave him her name, but a look that made him smile into his mirror for the rest of his life. For he perceived by her expression that her brain had been thoroughly sterilized after all thinks had been removed from the shell. All, that is, save one, her favorite whim. She gave her name, in words of one syllable, as if broadcasting from XYZ.

“And now,” she concluded, “won’t you return the compliment and give me your name too—for keeps?”

This was the proper form of proposal,

an aged colored psychic lady had once informed her, to address to a gent with salivated whiskers.

“Come with me,” said the stranger, for such he appeared to be, “I feel that you are to bring a great rectangular blessing into my life—it will be a debt I can never repay—I shall not even try to. For such as you I have long longed, longing.”

And he was right. To meet a girl at once rich and foolish—what man can have a greater ambition!

Once in the garlic atmosphere of Madison Square, however, amongst the tulips and bootblacks, his tone dropped several stitches. He seemed much colder. But then, not only was he sitting on a stone bench, but he was still guilty of wearing summer underwear. He looked her sternly in the hair.

“Woman,” he said, at last, “I cannot marry you. You smoke!”

In vain Angie denied it. It was only steam, she protested, that was coming from her mouth in the cold air. And on her fingers the yellow stains were merely bilious.

Frowning he shook his teeth and pointed to the curl athwart her brow. “Why, your

very hair is curled with a Cigar Stores Certificate!" he exclaimed, "and the lips that touch Egyptians shall never touch mine; and the same goes for Turkey, Havana and Virginia and Porto Rico." With a courteous gesture he tore the billion dollar bill from her head, put it into his vest pocket and fastened it with a hair pin.

It was for this alone he had lured her so far into the metropolis. Ah, yes, such things are done every day.

In another minute he was on board a Broadway car, laughing like a man who has just heard his divorced wife has married again.

* * * * *

But as the poet says, "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have lost at all." Angie could tell her grandchildren that one man had at least taken an option on her. To one man she had given her All.

That is, if she ever had any grandchildren. But to Angela Bish they seemed to be getting scarcer every day!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE DUMB DECEIVER

AT twenty-one, most girls you know know little, so little they little know how little they know. If you don't believe this, try it on your piano. Angela Bish inherited her double-zero intellect from her father who, before his vaccination was a middle-aged mud-eater of the Orinoco. However little she knew, however, she knew she knew little. And this she had acquired by painful inexperience.

Angie had never thought of anything less important than marriage, if anything can be less important. But marriage had never taken Angie seriously. It had never taken her at all. It had only winked at her, like a blueheaded fireman on a hose cart, as it hurtled past.

And yet Angie wasn't bad looking, really. Why should she be? She wasn't really bad. Her black eyes curled naturally, and her hair was heavily plated with gold. Why then did men shun her as if she were taking



IT WAS AN UNEASY SEASICK FEELING THAT
THERE WAS SOMEBODY UNDER THE BED

up a collection for the Crown Prince? In the endeavor to solve this mystery she went to great lengths, often as far as Flatbush, in the pursuit of a man—only to have him turn at bay and bite her in the elbow.

One day, and, curiously enough it happens to be the very day of which we are speaking, Angie awoke with a presentiment that her luck had changed. It wasn't merely that she found a comforter on the bed with her. She was used to that; and besides, its patchwork was too old and ragged to comfort her any longer. No, it was an uneasy, seasick feeling that there was somebody under the bed. Why, otherwise, should her mattress be heaving up and down as if she were crossing the English Channel in a bathtub? Also, strange, muffled sounds came from amidships, and the springs sprang, as if Father were searching for a collar button or a lost will.

Now, although to Angie it all seemed too good to be true, the prudish may consider it too true to be good. But, at all events, the facts, like the person under the bed, must come out. And so, after removing a few old shoes, an adding machine and a cat's

coffin, Angie beheld grinning at her a handsome face and foot. At least he was handsome to Angie—any man would be, were he grinning at her. Usually they frowned and asked her bitterly if she were a relic of the Great War.

Despite the happiness that had thus come



HARDLY A PROPER COSTUME IN WHICH TO
RECEIVE GENTLEMEN AT 7 A.M.

into her life, Angela was in a quandary—hardly a proper costume in which to receive gentlemen at seven a. m. She felt it quite too early to reveal the bare facts of her simple life. Luckily, however, unless the gentleman under the bed had a periscope she was comparatively safe from observation,

except for her feet. They were superlatively safe, for, having water on the knees, Angie always wore rubber boots to bed.

In the twinkling of an ear she had disguised her true self in an inveterate green kimono, and she was ready to explore the fastnesses of the hall bedroom. But Angela was proud, though practical. Would she stoop to coax him forth? Not she. She lay flat on her tum. The poor girl who had had few opportunities in her life to pull a man's leg now eagerly embraced the opportunity and a pair of brilliant trousers. Out they came, and a body, several arms and the grin with them. But the excitement was too great for a girl already weakened by hangnails, and for a time she feared that she would be prostrated by the violent attack of goose-flesh she now enjoyed.

The foregoing events occurred in far less time than it has taken me to tell them; but, you see, they were in a hurry. I am not.

Her visitor, for such, upon investigation, he proved to be, wore an officer's uniform. If he were not a colonel he was at least a nut. Notwithstanding the fact that bright red trousers and cast iron collars are not

being worn with blue embroidered jackets this season, he seemed to Angie to be a gentleman. True, he wore no shoes, but so long as he kept two feet away from her she didn't mind.

The elegant and refined way in which he sucked a tube of tooth paste she offered him, showed careful breeding; and, when he accepted the cold cream, Angie was pleased to observe that he did not eat it with his fingers. He used his mouth, with the occasional aid of a few toes and a shoe horn to get out the very last of it.

This at last finished, Angie presented him with a cigar. It was practically a new one, never having been smoked but once.

But talk he simply would not. He was as devoid of conversation as an American Indian having his tonsils filled. What cared Angela! Blissfully she squatted on her single-barrelled bed; and, as he idly dipped her switch in the mucilage and smiled up sympathetically, she told her new-found friend of her trials and convictions at the Artificial Egg factory where she now worked; and how, every day, when the eggs were shelled, she aged them for the market, escort-

ing the young and giddy ones to public banquets and musical comedies to give them that world-weary flavor which made them feel so thoroughly at home on a slice of fried restaurant ham.

Yes, for the first time that day Angie was falling in love. Cast no aspirin upon her, dear reader. She had no mother to guide her and caution her never to marry a man who didn't keep a Ford and a butler. She was only a poor working girl into whose life there had come an unexpected gleam of raspberry, whose little heart was tingling, like a telephone bell ringing, ringing the wrong number. She was fond and foolish and freckled; and such, beloved brethren, are ever the victims of the bounder and the book agent. Thus endeth the First Lesson.

But we are getting away from the handsome stranger, something which Angie certainly was not. She had not only fallen in love, but into his arms.

He seemed to take her entree as a matter of course, and said nothing in some strange guttural language. But, by the twitching of his huge Transylvanian ears, Angie was aware that he was running a temperature.

For several minutes nobody breathed in the room.

Outside, the little birds on the telegraph wires looked in at the moving picture and smiled at one another. Some even wept. Then they flew down into the street and simply raved over a stale pretzel, ten days dead. That just shows how shallow and unfeeling birds are. They don't really care.

But if I don't separate my two lovers pretty quickly, the infuriated man charging upstairs certainly will. For his charges are getting higher and higher; and he is now at the top floor.

* * * * *

As Angie came up for air she saw, standing in and about the doorway a human Hindenburg, as ugly as a restaurant waiter presenting a check for \$17.75. He was in a fury and a plaid suit.

"Mungo, come here!"

His master's voice! Angela's sweetheart shrivelled like a quail on toast. For a moment, as he stood there, his small brown eyes shining like half-gone coughdrops, she thought he would prove himself a man. Her hero! But, catching sight of a slender grace-

ful form concealed behind the intruder, his devotion began to sag at the knees, and finally, tempted beyond his appetite, he surrendered.

A pang of jealousy, hot as a Mohammedan hell, smote Angela. So she had a rival—and, of course, a blonde! One of the only gents she had ever loved had left her; for a banana. Not even for a red one, either, just an ordinary yellow three-for-ten! How terribly men's passions could sway them!

Yet she would not give him up; she could not. "You shall not take him from me," she wailed, "as if he were merely measles! I love him! I found him under the bed and he is mine!" Her gestures were almost improbable.

But the stern intruder, being a Vaudeville manager, knew, of course, how to act. Snap! The fetters were fastened to our handsome hero's collar.

"And now, young woman," said he, with grotesque variations in D natural, "you'll have to come along with me, too! It's no use weeping, I am stone deaf. I'm going to have you sent up for trying to steal my trained chimpanzee!"

It was in the cool cloisters of the County Jail, therefore, that Angela Bish realized how little she knew—especially of men. Again her heavy heart had caused her to turn turtle dove. But although her life and her cheeks had grown colorless, she did not repaint. The love light had faded from her eyes; but then, she could wear tortoise shell spectacles.

No, her love affair had proved quite otherwise, but everyone had a flivver, nowadays; and, after all, what was life without a few regrets? She didn't know. She didn't even know what life was with them. The things Angie didn't know were increasing every day.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE MOZAMBIQUE MONKEYS

NOBODY loves me!" How many a maid has wailed the words, or vainly tried to scratch them on the window pane with her \$4.50 rhinestone ring.

"Nobody loves me!" The saddest exclamation in any language including the Scandinavian, excepting "Please Remit!"

"Nobody loves me!" So wept Angela Bish, and it was true. Nobody but the flies, the mosquitoes. For the heat was hot on Avenue B; and her bedroom seemed more full of bed than usual—bed and hairpins. And on the wall paper the eczema seemed to be getting worse. About the bureau it was quite, quite bald.

Lonely? Angie yearned and yawned for male society with the ravenous appetite of a man-eating shark. But men were shy of Angie; very shy, for men. They got rid of her quickly, as if she were a lead quarter.

Yes, Angie was full of loneliness. What

she wanted was Someone to murmur soft, sweet, sticky things in her hair, and to let her lay her loving skull on his vest pocket beside the fountain pen—His fountain pen!—while, in the gloaming, they read together “How to be Happy, though Sober.”

This was her dream; but alas, dreams go. And when they go, they usually go by contraries. And so, Angie had long been saving up for a phonograph. That seemed to be the only virtuous way she could ever be thrilled by hearing a smooth-shaven voice passionately baritoning to her “You are the very gooiest girl in all the glad New York!”

In her fond impatience she had already purchased this classic song-record; and she had thirty-one cents saved up in her mustache cup for the phonograph. Often, in the longing, lingering evenings, she sadly attempted to play the disc herself with a cambric needle. But it was unsatisfactory. Finally, in despair, she threw it out the window, and hit a Scandinavian tinsmith. He seemed to be so much struck by her that it consoled her a little.

But not much. Melancholy came back with the mosquitoes, both male and female.

THE MOZAMBIQUE MONKEYS 97

Yet how dangerous it is to meddle with Fate! In Angela's anguish she had said she wanted to die; and the very next day, sure enough, she was tickled to death. For when, after washing her hands, she started to wipe them on the evening paper that she had always found so dry, lo, her eyes fell on these glad tidings, under the heading, "GIRLS WANTED; FEMALE"

JIMP Girlene wanted with bow legs to play on harp with toes. Apply B. Squimp, Cafe Noir.
TuThuSat3t.

Angie burst into a loud smile. Why, she was made for the place! Her mirror had told her so confidentially many a time, as old friends will, when the news is disagreeable. And didn't she dimly recall when a mere baby having played with her toes? Surely with a little practice and a pair of violet stockings she could do it again.

She happened, at present, to be just out of harps, but she sat down and tried a few minor chords on the radiator, and succeeded in eliciting considerable applause from the retired bean-boiler in the next room. That is, she thought it was applause till the cus-

pidor came sailing through the transom. Even the undertaker on the ground floor tip-toed up in black gloves to tell her that she was interfering with his business. She was making noise enough, he said, to awaken the dead. So Angie played on in diminished thirds.

Bright and early that evening, when moon and men were full, she interviewed B.



FINDING THAT SHE COULD RIDE THE HARP
SAFELY HE SET HER RIGHT TO WORK

Squimp, who was as silent as if clams had suddenly taken place. Finding, however, that she could ride the harp safely, he set Angie right to work jazzing with his orchestra of Manicured Mozambique Monkeys.

Angie's luck at last had turned. But don't get excited about it—that's not always a good sign. Milk often turns, too, and nobody gives three cheers about it.

But it was wonderful, when she began to play, how sure-footed she was! Her harp seemed half human, half divine. As for Angie, she seemed half human, half monkey. How merrily she leaped from string to string! How her toes twinkled, as she ran from chord to chord, and *vice versâ*. Soon she was the pedicure of all eyes. For Angela, though only faintly pretty, had a beautiful sole. True, it was somewhat blistered; but, at such a time even fallen arches are beautiful. Look at the Temple of Diocletian, for instance.

What cared Angie, then, though she had worn the skin off eleven or twelve toes! Had not men acclaimed her daring feet? Why, even the Mozambique Monkeys were telling their tails of her skill!

Lame but happy, Angie tottered home. If she had been friends with the undertaker she would have asked him to embalm her feet; they felt like hot Frankfurters with mustard. You must have seen them—Frankfurters—but think of being them! But Angie fell asleep and dreamed that she was married to a Chilean chiropodist who made her dance on sandpaper. At the beatified expression of her face and neck the mosquitoes laughed heartily, all night long.

But, no matter how happy a Thursday may be, the next day is sure to be Friday. Angie's toes were still so rare that she was forced to crawl to the Café Noir on her hands and knees. She felt a bit conspicuous, but no one had ever noticed her before, and she was touched. Many people touched her. Benevolent old gentlemen in fur collars poked kindly at her with their canes and wept. "Somebody's daughter, perhaps," they said, "who knows!" Then they stepped over her and went their way.

She was somewhat annoyed, however, when crossing the street, by the way full grown automobiles strolled across her spine. It hurt her to think they could be so hard



“SOMEBODY’S DAUGHTER PERHAPS,” THEY SAID,
“WHO KNOWS”

and careless. Even when they were mere Fords it hurt her.

The Manicured Mozambiques had already grown very fond of Angie, and when she arrived, so picturesque in mud and blushes, they did their best to make her feel at home.

The leader, an elderly ape, placed in her chair a nice, comfortable cushion—it was of fly paper with the soft side up—and the trombone hospitably offered her a peanut.



When Angie bit it open, she found it stuffed with a toothsome but energetic black beetle. But, despite her fatigue, Angie was not hungry.

Little things like that, however, show how even the higher mammals can be affected by innocence and idiocy and other things with small black i's like Angie's. It is a beautiful thought, but beautiful thoughts are like church steeples—one cannot dwell on them long.

Have you ever, dear reader, met a person

you seem to have known before in some strange, mysterious existence—before you were divorced, perhaps, or when you were in jail, or living in Chicago? It gives you eerie chilblains up and down your spine, as if some one were walking on your cradle. Well, Angie had such a feeling, that night, when she looked at the gentleman in green burlap opposite her. He was thinking, and winking, and drinking mucilage through a quill.

At first she thought she was attracted to him merely because he was throwing kisses at her—kisses and spaghetti—you know how that always intrigues one—but later she was sure that either he was her Affinity, or else she owed him money—perhaps both. It gave her a sweetly uncomfortable embarrassment, like that of an Episcopal clergyman who finds his pockets filled with molasses.

When, however, at 3 a. m., he followed her out of the Café, wildly beckoning, she knew he was after her. The very way he grabbed her arm told her that he was one who would not hesitate to lay hands upon her if he dared.

She turned upon him like a fish hook, like

a piece of sewing silk when a man tries to thread a needle. But in her heart, she was already crying "Kamerad!" Already she could see their marriage certificate framed in a decoration of dropsical cupids, and her name spelled wrong . . . she could hear herself replying, "You bet I will!" . . . She closed her eyes with both hands. . . . Perhaps . . . Perhaps, to their happy Hoboken home, with a live linoleum in the kitchen, and quartered oak carpets, Little Children might come to bless them—and have mumps—and pour hot chocolate into the grand piano . . . perhaps . . . per . . .

"Fly with me!"

Then it was true—true! Every girl who has ever been abducted or has been to the movies, knows that delicious alarm. It is much like bathing in champagne for the first time; one doesn't know whether one will be drunk, or drowned. One is aware only of the expense. So Angie struggled, and was struggled at . . . until a red table cloth was thrown over her head, and she was intoxicated by love. Then all was dark—as dark as the inside of a lead pencil.

Angie was dreaming she was being kissed by Lloyd George, when she was awakened by a fly philandering across her upper lip. She was alone in a circus tent with her captor and the fly. The latter she instantly recognized as one she had known quite intimately, on Avenue B. The former was just as unknown as usual. The heat was intense, as it sometimes is in tents; and somewhere in the middle distance she could distinctly hear a Fat Woman eating cream with a ladle. A clock struck Four. Angie felt that it was long past three o'clock.

"Where were you born?" demanded he to which we have already referred.

This was a strange question, thought Angie. Some, indeed, had asked her When she was born, but most asked merely Why. She was a strange girl, especially to strangers.

"In Mozambique?"

Angie trembled like a guava jelly. But she could not tell a lie; no one can with a mouth full of table cloth.

"Come here!" He fairly uttered the words. And then, seizing her hand, he

gazed at it like a palmist giving a fifty-cent reading. But not so lovingly.

“My word,” he exclaimed, at last, “you are not manicured! Have you got the face to say you are *not* a monkey—and with that face?”

With a pitiful slob the proprietor of the Side Show of Freaks rushed out of the tent, leaving it there with Angie and the fly. For a moment the Fat Woman stopped eating, and even the fly turned pale. . . .

And Angie, poor Angie, so thusly duped, gazing sadly at her finger nails, so rich in real estate, realized too late that the way to a man's heart is through the Beauty Parlor.

For no man could make a monkey of Angie; she hadn't enough brains. And besides, monkeys, like poets, are born, not made.

CHAPTER X.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE TEMPORARY HUSBAND

MAN'S age is of man's life a thing apart; 'tis woman's whole existence." Thus saith the poet and thus saith I. The three years that Angela Bish was twenty-three were the happiest in her life. But as this didn't happen till she was twenty-nine we can't tell about it now. For Angie was now much younger than she was at twenty-three. She was only twenty-four.

And still Angie was unwed. She didn't, in fact, have a single husband. But who wants one that is single, anyway? Other girls had married again and again and again. Angie had never had a nibble to her name.

I see a lady in the rear of the room raising her hand. Why not? you ask. Well, you see, Angie was one of those feverish females who turn into a quivering jelly upon seeing a man, with whipped cream on top.

She was so sweet that after one taste of her you had to rush right off and eat sand. When she met a man she was so soft that she almost ran. The man ran, also.

Yet Angie was pretty enough, too. She had a mild Alderney expression on her face that was very restful. You always felt that she was just about to moo. But she never did; that was perhaps her only charm.

Only once in her life had Angie been kissed. The perpetrator had been immediately removed to the Psychopathic Ward and treated with chopped ice; but to Angela Bish the event was so solemn and holy that she had not washed that kiss off her lips for a month, and on that last day you could distinctly see twenty-eight coffee rings surrounding her mouth.

One kiss in twenty-four years works out to about 1-8760 of a kiss per day. Now, no girl can live on such a pittance—at least, not in New York. She is bound to show traces of malnutrition, even if it doesn't eventually run into glanders or the Willies. The effect upon Angie was terrible. She couldn't use a telephone unless a man had recently pressed his moustache against the

THE TEMPORARY HUSBAND 109

mouthpiece. It made her ill. She had to use a moustache cup for eating her soup.

Are there any more questions? No?—then we must proceed with our tale, like a mouse or a zebra.

The most beautiful things about Angie, except her wonderful capacity for being married, were her appetite and her hope. She had, the day before the story commences—yes, it has really commenced, at last—demonstrated both of these qualities by inserting the following advertisement in the evening paper, under the heading *Male Help Wanted*.

WANTED, A HUSBAND. Apply in person, to A. Bish, 2001 Avenue B., between 6 o'clock. Only experienced men desired. No Chinamen.

And outside her door she had pinned a Notice: *Line Forms to Right*.

But alas, husbands don't come as easily as that, do they, Lillian? One can't telephone for them and have them delivered C. O. D. wrapped in waxed paper in a neat box. One has to go out and catch them, like alligators or colds. But Angie didn't know. She really didn't know anything about Life, except what she saw on picture post cards.

She was just a Nice Girl, with a few adenoids.

So Angie waited—and what is more pathetic than a waitress!

So Angela waited, also, manicuring her teeth, and counting her fingers, never quite able to decide whether or not she had made a mistake in the total.

So waited Angela Bish, waited while she seemed to see her youth departing, softly, silently, like a hall roomer who hasn't paid his rent.

Came a day (we're not saying "there came" this season) when Angie decided to open her last package of cyanide—when—when—a knock on her chamber door sent her blood pressure up to 313.

"Yes!" Instinctively Angie had yelled it out before he had had time to change his mind, if he had had one. That day she would have married any man, or any day. She would have married anyone who was even partly a man—a mandrake, or amanuensis.

Now I suppose, dear little reader, you are smiling and expecting some rich, handsome marcelled hero to enter. Well, so was Angie.

THE TEMPORARY HUSBAND 111

Her semi-tropical fancy had already pictured him, a baby grand Chesterfield, richly upholstered in Scotch tweeds, with, perhaps, if it wasn't hoping too much, carved Louis XIV legs. He would have semi-circular eyebrows and be a Marathon, non-stop kissist and convincing cuddler.

Together in the gloaming, Oh, my Darling, they would jointly and severally entwine upon the cosy couch, and talk fudge talk and doll's dialect till their arteries began to harden.

But, oh dear! You know how different real life is to what it would be if it were not different. The door opened, and something entered. Reader, close your eyes. It was chubby, and talked as if his epiglottis was full of cabinet pudding—or even stewed bananas. At sight of his pale blue necktie, in Angie's heart mortification had already set in. But Angie was brave, and the blood twinkled in her veins. After all, a husband was always a husband, even when he lisped.

“I would like,” he said, if indeed we must call him he, which we really must, temporarily, at least, “I would like to find a female with a lavender soul!”

“What colored sole?” Angie asked, dreadfully.

“Lavender.”

Hoping against hope, Angie meditatively took off one slipper. But what color her sole proved to be, I hesitate to say. Yet it was not lavender; I'm terribly sure of that. Angie's stockings, you see, were rather scarcely, that week, and besides she had been for hours absent-mindedly wandering about in the coal bin, trying to find a pet poached egg. And even the Duchess of Westminster, you know, might have got a little dusty, mightn't she not have might?

Angie's visitor looked modestly away. He hadn't been so shocked since a missionary had told him that there were savage tribes in Central Africa who had never been manicured.

“Not the soul of your foot,” he explained, “What I want to see, my dear, is your psychic self. That's the current slang you know, for your inmost ego.”

“I had 'em all pulled out,” said Angie, “when I was sixteen. They gave me cankers. Don't you think marriage is a beautiful disease?”

Her caller pretended to blow his nose. He was really surreptitiously powdering it with a marshmallow. You never can tell, nowadays. And as he proceeded, he watched the girl closely.

“You are far from beautiful,” he admitted; “your face is on wrong. Your eyes are poorly fenestrated, and there is something about your general nasal expression that—you aren’t seasick are you, or anything, are you, Miss Bish?”

Angie wasn’t interested in anything female, including herself. All she wanted was to glue her lips to a man’s and see what happened. But it never did, and so, what Angie wanted to know was, When were they going to be married? She said as much. More. Much more. Much.

“I could make you beautiful,” it was now saying. “Build up a semblance of chin, rearrange your nose, blow up your eyes and—let’s see, two or three coats of rose-pink and a good varnish—one of those you can pour boiling water on, you know, and after sandpapering your cheeks down to a shape-ly curve—oh, Miss Bish, how I have longed to see what I could do with a really ugly

face! How I could improve it, dress it, decorate it to attune with your soul!"

Angie barely listened. She was thinking, When he is once my husband nothing shall part us except jury duty. But, you know how it is, sometimes, in the midst of one's wildest yearning, when all one's being is being wafted heavenwards, as on the wings of doves, something, a mere flea, perhaps, or a relapse of hay fever will suddenly bite you on the shoulder. What was it he had said? A word came back, like a cat left behind when you go to the country . . . a word . . . "decorate" . . . 'twas full of sinister meaning.

"What are you?" she demanded. "In heaven's name, speak! Let me know the worst before I phone for the minister for first aid. Decorate? Did you say decorate? Speak, before we are harnessed for life!"

The being smiled. "Why yes," said he. "Of course. Why not? I am an Interior Decorator!"

"Good heavens! And I thought you were a man!"

Angela Bish had fainted all over the wash stand. . . .

Twenty years are supposed to have elapsed. Supposed, that is, by you and me, dear reader. Not by Angie. She had no idea that she was now nearing forty-five; no idea that anyone knew it. No one does. In her madness she still thought of herself as a young girl.

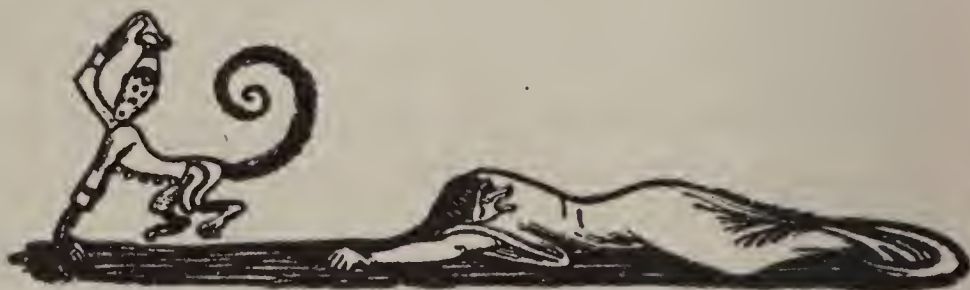
Now, in twenty years many things may happen. But nothing had. To be sure, several men had entered her life, but upon seeing her, they had left hurriedly by a rear window. Still she pursued them, still they escaped. Still she smiled, and hoped anew, like a man searching an oyster stew for the oyster.

For the fact was, the sad fact, if you look at it that way, Angela Bish was insane. The shock had completely unsettled her reason.

But there is always a compensation for all misfortunes. In her present state everyone says that she is far, far more intelligent than when she was really sane. Life, now, is one long lucid interval. She has perfect peace—and so do the men. She has a fond delusion. Angie believes that she is married. She is sure of it. So much so, that every man she sees seems to be her husband, try-

ing to escape. And, as husbands are always trying to escape, perhaps Angie may be right, after all!

THE END







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