

CRUCIBLE

© Ben Ames Williams.

By BEN AMES WILLIAMS

CHAPTER XI—Continued

"Don't come again, Phil," Mr. Sentry said. Mr. Hare stepped away so that they might speak alone. Phil felt suddenly empty. "But father, mother will want to come!" Mr. Sentry smiled. "Of course! If she wishes. But not you children. I'd rather you didn't; and certainly not the girls." And he asked, "How are they?" "Fine."

"Mary—happy with Mr. Endle?" "Yes."

"Barbara well again?" "Yes."

Mr. Sentry nodded. Phil waited; and his father said at last: "Phil—I don't know that it matters now. But I want you to know a thing or two." Phil felt his cheek stiff with pain. "About my testimony, Phil." The older man faced his son fairly. "All I said about that night was true. I didn't know Miss Wines was there. I shot her by accident. And—I had had nothing to do with her."

Phil's throat was full; but he managed to speak. "I believed you, father," he said. "We all did. That it was—an accident!"

Mr. Sentry cleared his throat. "About the woman last summer," he said. "and the other, long ago. All that is between your mother and me. She knows they didn't touch what she and I had together."

Phil could not speak; and the older man said: "About the appeal. Appeals, delays, tricks wouldn't help in the long run. I hope you—understood my decision."

Phil said slowly: "Yes sir! But you don't need to consider us. We're up to it." He added: "Of course, Mr. Hare says perhaps the Governor—Well, I mean if we can make him believe you—"

Sentry shook his head. "No, Phil. That's the jury's province, to decide whether I told the truth or not. If they didn't believe me, the Governor has no right to say they were wrong."

"Mr. Falkran says he could get a new trial—"

"I had a fair trial! Bob Flood let Falkran get away with a lot of things." Mr. Sentry's lips set. "I won't put you all through that again, Phil!" And he said, almost curtly: "So—that's all, then. Good-by!"

Outside, Phil found himself trembling. He said apologetically to Mr. Hare, "I feel about ten years old, right now."

"So do all men, sometimes," Mr. Hare assented. "But they never let anyone guess, except their wives."

April slipped away; and Phil missed Linda more and more. But on the first day of May, he reached the office at the usual hour, rang for a stenographer—and Linda came in. Phil stared at her. She seated herself at the end of his desk, opened a notebook, laid sharp pencils ready.

He cried: "Linda! What are you doing here?"

"Come to take your letters."

"But how did you get here?"

"I persuaded Miss Randall to give me the job."

"But you can't—"

"Don't you believe it," she retorted. "Nobody can get a job under Miss Randall unless they can prove they're good. Certainly not a girl like me. You know, one of the idle rich? We have to prove we've got everything."

"But you—"

"Shorthand, typing, business forms, everything," she assured him gaily. "If you don't believe me, try me." And she said then: "I ought to be good! I've been working at it, studying twelve hours a day for six weeks, and practicing besides. Hence these dark shadows under my lovely eyes. Notice?"

And when he could not speak, she demanded: "Mean to say you haven't missed me? Haven't you even noticed that I'd quit being underfoot around your house all the time?"

"Gosh, I've missed you awfully. But Lin, what's the idea?"

"The idea, young fellow-me-lad," she said, speaking lightly lest her throat swell with tears, "the idea is that I have diagnosed your case, and written your prescription, and the prescription is me, taken regularly, in large doses. So when you go into business, into business go I. When you sit all day at a desk, I pull my chair up to the corner of the same desk. You'll be spending most of your time here for a while. Well, so will I."

"What do your folks think about it?"

"Highly approve," she assured him. "Would you like me to get my father's consent?"

"Of course I can."

"Be here all day with me?" She spoke huskily. "Be anywhere, always, Phil, with you."

"You'll marry somebody—"

"You, if you'll have me."

"You know I can't, Lini!"

"Then at least I can be your secretary."

"You're so doggoned stubborn."

"But efficient!"

He grinned. "All right," he said. "You know it will be grand for me, having you around."

"Me too, Phil."

"Take a letter!"

Her pencil poised; began to fly.

CHAPTER XII

Phil accepted Linda's presence in the office, but with misgivings. He reported the matter to Mrs. Sentry that night.

"Do you think it's all right, mother?" he asked. "She's sure to be talked about." And he said, thinking aloud: "Linda's so darned fine. If things were different—But they're not, of course. Never can be. I never can marry, or have children. I realize that." He added tenderly, almost lightly: "Besides, my job is to take care of you."

She said: "Yes, Linda's sweet; but she knows that I need you. I shan't always be selfish about you, Phil, but—I shall need you and Barbara, for a while."

He thought doubtfully of Dan, but

marry her, and raise about nine children and keep her so busy she won't have time to think about all this. People think too much anyway!"

Phil said: "I know; but he looks at it just the other way. He says we have to face it, live it down." And he confessed, half-angrily, "To hear him talk, you'd think he wanted her to wear a placard telling the world who she is."

Dan said scornfully: "That stuffed shirt! He's—like a woman. He wants to be a martyr. You know, the old line: 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honor more.'"

"I don't blame him for testifying. Do you?"

"Hell, no! I'd have done the same. But why should he rub it in now? I'll go see him tonight and tell him so."

But Dan's arguments were unavailing too. Professor Brace chose a Sunday afternoon in May for his confession. There had been tennis. Linda was there. When it was time

She did not speak. He stood like one awaiting judgment; but Dan said honestly: "He wasn't to blame, Barb. He was summoned, had to tell or lie. I'd have done the same."

"Of course," she assented. "I don't blame him for testifying. But Mac, I do blame you for telling me."

"Oh, Barbara, you can't fool yourself, pretend to ignore what has happened!"

Barbara faced him for a moment; then suddenly without a word she turned, turned and ran, ran into the house and away. He called her name, but he did not pursue her.

Dan said disgustedly, "You may be a professor, but you're the darnedest fool I ever saw!"

"She will see I'm right, in the end!" Brace insisted.

But he was wrong in this prediction. Barbara thereafter avoided him, and when he came to the house she was quick to disappear. Yet Barbara began to wish to know all that had happened at the trial.

She asked her first questions on the Sunday following. Dan came,



"Mac and I Have Never Teamed Up," Barbara Confessed.

he promised: "Sure, Linda knows. We'll be here, mother. Don't be afraid!"

It was the first day of May when Linda came into the office; and during that month, July seemed far away. Business problems arose to worry Phil. Once he sought Mr. Loran's advice; but the Loran home was closed. Mr. and Mrs. Loran, he heard, had gone to Europe for the summer. So Phil turned to his mother, and every evening he consulted with her, asking her counsel, by his demands upon her forcing her to find strength to meet them. Also, Barbara was better every day, the flood of spring which flowed across the city surging through her too.

But Barbara never mentioned her father. It was as though she had deliberately put him out of her mind. The others, recognizing this, did not speak of him in her presence; and they sought for her sake to protect her in every way, to find a routine, to live as near normally as possible.

Dan was often at the house; and sometimes Phil wondered how his mother could be blind to the bright devotion between Dan and Barbara that was so plain to his informed eyes. Once Dan wished to speak to Mrs. Sentry, to tell her their secret; but Phil's persuasions restrained him. Yet Dan came often, and Professor Brace too; and the tennis court had use again. If Sundays were fair they might all be there, Linda and Barbara, the Professor and Dan and Phil. Sometimes Mrs. Dane, or Mrs. Urban or other friends of Mrs. Sentry dropped in, and after tennis there was tea.

was Professor Brace who in the end shattered the insulation of silence with which they had conspired to protect Barbara. He insisted on confessing to her his damning testimony against Mr. Sentry at the trial. He warned Phil in advance of what he meant to do; and Phil, unable to dissuade him, told Dan what Brace intended.

"I tried to talk him out of it," he explained. "Probably Barb can stand it now, though. She's a lot better. I'm more worried about mother. She doesn't show things on the surface much, but she's awfully shaky inside. Every once in a while, she shivers."

"I know."

"And lately her left eyelid keeps twitching."

"Sure, she's pretty well worn out." Dan reverted to Barbara. "But Phil, Professor Brace is a darned fool! What Barb needs is to forget all this business; never speak of it or think of it again. As soon as I can get a job somewhere else, I'm going to take her away from here,

for tea, she and Phil and Mrs. Sentry went into the house, and Dan and the Professor played a set of singles, Barbara looking on; and when the set ended—Professor Brace won—Barbara said warmly: "You're good, Mac. We'll teach Dan some tennis yet, before we get through."

Dan retorted cheerfully, "Maybe I'm not so good, but Linda and I can give you two a lesson, any time."

"Mac and I have never teamed up," Barbara confessed. "But it wouldn't take us long to learn."

The professor said suddenly: "We teamed up once, Barbara. The first night I met you. The night we followed your father home."

Barbara's color drained away. Dan said furiously, "You darned fool!" But Barbara said: "Hush, Dan. Mac didn't say that just to make me unhappy, did you, Mac? What are you trying to tell me?"

"I just want you to know, Barbara, that I testified against your father, told the jury about our seeing him that night, helped to convict him." She was white as ivory; and he said: "You had to know something. I wanted it to come from me."

after dinner; and Barbara, ready for tennis, met him with a bright challenge; and Phil and Mrs. Sentry followed them out to the court to watch the game. Dan and Barbara had played together before, and at first Dan had been able to win at will; but as Barbara's strength returned, she had easily the better of their matches, opposing her graceful swiftness and disciplined strokes to Dan's furious energy and awkward force.

This day Dan, running back for a perfect job, piled headlong into the backstop and rebounded and sat down hard; and Barbara laughed aloud, and then called in quick solicitude: "Hurt, Dan?"

"No, not a bit!" he retorted, and scrambled to his feet. "Hit 'em in my reach, you big bully! Come on!"

Phil thought their words, their happy voices, were eloquent. He looked at his mother a little anxiously; but he saw that her eyes were curiously serene.

"Did you hear her tone when she asked Dan whether he was hurt?" she asked softly.

He pretended surprise. "Her tone? No. Why?"

"She's growing fond of him."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Majority of Highway Motorists Found to Be Making Less Than Twenty-Mile Trip

Highway travel is predominately a short-distance movement and less than two out of every 100 vehicles observed on main highways are traveling more than 100 miles to reach their destinations. Eight out of ten are traveling less than 20 miles. These are averages of preliminary figures obtained in 11 states in planning surveys being conducted by the bureau of public roads in co-operation with 43 state highway departments.

The main highways and their extensions through cities carry 59.9 per cent of the total motor-vehicle traffic; 30.8 per cent is on the large mileage of other city streets and scarcely more than 10 per cent of the total occurs on all secondary and local rural roads which, in mileage, have eight times the extent of the main highways.

Preliminary data from 17 states show traffic on the main highways and transcity connections to be 58 per cent urban in origin and 42 per cent rural. These are approximately the percentages of urban and rural population in the states where the counts were made.

Ninety-three per cent of the use

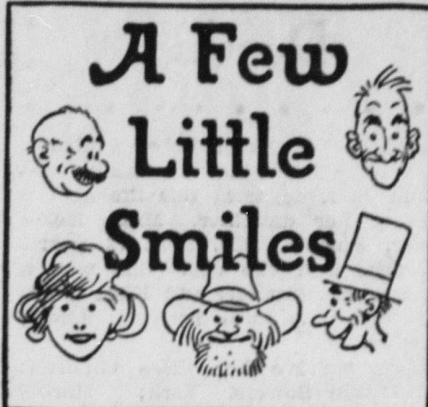
of city streets, other than through routes, is by urban vehicles, while 84 per cent of the traffic on minor rural roads is by rural vehicles.

Data being accumulated in the planning surveys, says the bureau, will give definite indications as to what should be accomplished in further road building; as to the relative transportation service that may be afforded by improving this or that class of road; as to who will benefit if either is done and who, being benefited, should pay the cost and in what proportion.

The states are still at work collecting a mass of statistical facts on highways and preparing the first complete maps of all rural highways. Each of the 43 states will publish its own results.

How to Tell Mule's Age

One way to tell a mule's age is by his teeth. On the edges of the incisors are grooves or cups that wear away as the animal advances in years. Another way the ages of mules are determined is by the cavernous spaces above their eyes. These sunken places do not fill out when an old mule is fattened.



LOW TRICKERY

A fisherman was accusing his companions of foul play. "We agreed," he explained, "that the one who caught the first fish would treat the others to supper. I'll be doggoned if those two fellows didn't deliberately refuse to pull in their lines, even when they had bites, just so I'd be stuck."

"That was pretty mean," agreed his listeners.

"Oh, well," the fisherman relented, "I didn't have any bait on my hook."

Plenty Right at Home

A woman entered a butcher's shop with her little daughter. Some tripe was displayed on the counter, and the little girl asked what it was.

"Tripe," replied the mother.

"That's funny," said the child, "daddy says that's what we get over the radio."—Stray Stories.

THE SAME IDEA



Wife—My, what a large bill for a small bill!

Hubby—That's what I thought when I paid it.

Do They Go Together?

Little Molly was visiting on the farm of her grandfather. She went with him to feed the sheep. A little lamb came up to her and started wiggling its tail.

"Grandpa, why do lambs have tails?" she asked. "The flies don't bother them."

No Trip?

"See here, Tommy," said the teacher, "You mustn't say, 'I ain't going.' You must say, 'I am not going; he is not going; they are not going; we are not going.'"

"Gee," said Tommy, "ain't nobody going?"

Strictly Honest

Judge—So you broke into the tobacconist's shop just to get a 10-cent cigar? What were you doing in the safe?

Prisoner—I was putting in the dime.—Stray Stories.

Ability Tested

Employer—I advertised for a good strong boy. Think you can fill the bill?

Applicant—Well, I just finished licking 19 other applicants outside.—Stray Stories.

Too Soon

Hiram—Gosh, I smell something burning.

Mrs. Hiram—Yes, it's the pie; but according to the cookbook, I can't take it out for another 12 minutes.

No Profit

Teacher—Can you give me an example of wasted energy, Bertram?

Bertram—Yes, sir. Telling a hair-raising story to a bald-headed man.

Who Won?

Jerry—Father, in this book it says that in one battle Brooklyn was hit 17 times.

Father—Who was pitching?

SOUND ENOUGH



"Is your husband a sound sleeper?"

"Makes sound enough when he sleeps to wake the dead."

Two Kinds

"I have perfected a new kind of airplane," said the enthusiastic inventor.

"Which kind," asked the sardonic friend. "Something to fly or something to write about."—Washington Star.

Practical

Mother—Willie, put this piece of wedding cake under your pillow and what you dream will come true.

Willie—Why can't I eat the cake and put the pillow on my stomach?

CLASSIFIED DEPARTMENT

POULTRY

BRED FOR PRODUCTION: Ducks
 RAISED FOR PROFIT: Chickens
 SOLD BY QUALITY: Turkeys
 STARTED CHICKS: Pullets
 MILFORD HATCHERY
 Pikeville, T. O. Rockdale, Md.

Angora Fills Needs In Blouse or Bolero



Pattern 6285

Angora is all the rage and you, too, can be right in style with the help of your knitting needles. If it's glamor you are after, make the bolero, so lovely for evening wear at any season; use white, black or a pastel shade. The blouse, with its smart ribbed effect, is just the thing for wear under a suit. Pattern 6285 contains directions for making blouse and bolero in sizes 12 to 14 and 16 to 18; illustrations of it and of stitches; materials needed.

To obtain this pattern send 15 cents in coins to The Sewing Circle, Household Arts Dept., 259 West 14th Street, New York, N. Y. Please write your name, address and pattern number plainly.

Conciliating Manner

It is difficult to tell how much men's minds are conciliated by a kind manner and gentle speech.—Cicero.

CHOOSE FERRY'S

Dated Seeds

you know they'll grow

DISAPPOINTING stands of vegetables and flowers may be caused by seeds that have become too old to produce first-class crops.

It is difficult for gardeners to distinguish between "stale" seeds and seeds in their prime. To help you, all Ferry's Seed packets are dated. But first, Ferry's Seeds must pass rigid tests for germination and vitality.

When buying your seeds, look for this year's date-mark, "Packed for Season 1939." It's on the back of every packet in your local dealer's convenient display of Ferry's Seeds.



FERRY'S DATED SEEDS

USE FERRY'S GARDEN SPRAY—NON-POISONOUS, NON-STAINING, ECONOMICAL

FLORIDA'S

LARGEST SYSTEM OF FINE HOTELS

Delightful Locations All Resort Pleasures Down-to-Earth Rates

- Hotel Manatee River . . . Bradenton
- Hotel Sarasota Terrace . . . Sarasota
- Hotel Lakeland Terrace . . . Lakeland
- Hotel Tampa Terrace . . . Tampa
- Hotel Florida . . . Tampa
- Hotel Royal Worth . . . W. Palm Beach
- Hotel Dixie Court . . . W. Palm Beach
- Hotel Charlotte Harbor . . . Punta Gorda
- Gasparrilla Inn . . . Boca Grande
- Useppa Inn . . . Osprey Island
- Everglades Inn . . . Everglades
- Road & Gun Club . . . Everglades

Inquire Hotels, Travel Agents or N. Y. Office, 743 Fifth Avenue
COLLIER FLORIDA COAST HOTELS
 Bureau C. Collier, Inc., 100 Nassau, N.Y. City