HIS SECOND WIFE

By ERNEST POOLE

Author of "The Harbor," "His Family"

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THIS STARTS THE STORY

Ethel Knight is country bred, idealistic and utterly unsophisticated. Her father's death forces her to make her home with Amy Lanier, her sister. A month later Amy dies of ptomaine poison, and Ethel keeps house for Amy's husband, Joe, and the child, Susette. Ethel and Joe marry. She arranges to take voice culture from Joe's friend, "Dwight." They plan to reawaken in Joe his genius at drafting. But, fearing Dwight may be too interested in her, she tells him "to be sensible, etc.," if they are to continue friends. Fanny Carr pays Ethel a visit and hands her some typewritten pages detailing her acquaintance with Dwight. Ethel defies her to show them to Joe. She pities Fanny's way of looking at life.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

SUDDENLY Ethel's eye was caught by Amy's photograph on the table. By degrees in the last few months Joe had ceased to notice it there. But how he would notice it now, very soon, as he'd read what Fanny had brought. For Amy had taught Joe long ago to be jealous, never too sure of a wife.

"So Amy is here again, after all. I wonder what I shall say to Joe? * * * Oh, rubbish! Use more common sense! All I've got to do is to make him see why I never told him about Dwight. It was only part of that plan I had. But what a fool! Oh, what a fool!"

When at last Joe's key was heard in the door, both women leaned slowly forward, as though the strain were unbearable. And then as Joe came into the hall, Fanny said suddenly, sharp and clean.

"No, I won't keep quiet! Joe has got to be told of this!" Ethel wheeled on her:

"How odious!"

"I can't help it—he's my friend!"

And the next moment with Joe in the room, both women were talking to him at once—angrily, incoherently, almost shoving each other away. But only for a moment. It was too disgusting! Ethel left off and stood rigid there, while Fanny talked on rapidly.

She was speaking of how Ethel had cut off Joe from Amy's friends. Ethel heard only bits of this, for it all seemed so confused and unreal. But she noticed how nervously tired he looked, all keyed up from his day at the office. She remembered that his partner was out of town on business, that Joe had been running the office alone. "He will be hard to manage," she thought. He interrupted Fanny in a sharp, excitable tone.

"What's it all about?" he asked.

"It's time you saw where you stand, Joe Lanier. Look at this girl. I don't blame her. Look how young she is, and then look at yourself. Here, take a look at yourself in that mirror. Are you still young? Can't you see the lines, the gray hairs, Joe? They're coming—oh, they're coming! Can you supply all the love she wants?"

"Fanny?" He snapped out her name in so ugly a voice that she lost no time. She shoved those papers into his hands and began to tell him what they were. But Joe refused to read them and grew each moment angrier.

"Joe!" cried Fanny sharply. "When you brought Dwight to dinner here, he met your wife as though for the first time. Did you know they had been friends for months?" And at his startled look, she added, "If you didn't, you'd better read all this!" There fell a sudden silence.

"I'll explain everything—when we're alone," Ethel managed to put in. How queer and thick her own voice sounded.

Now Joe had gone into the hall with Fanny. Curtly he said good-night to her. The door closed, and there was silence again. Why didn't he come? He must be standing there in the hall trying to get hold of himself. Oh, how terribly hurt he must feel! But she checked the sudden lump in her throat. "Remember now—just common sense?" This was a time for keeping clear! But Joe had come back into the room, and passing the gilt mirror into which Fanny had told him to look, he stopped a moment.

"Don't do that, Joe!" In an instant, in spite of herself, her love for him rose up in a wave, with fear and pity and anger too. She came to him, and her voice was shaking. "Oh, Joe—Joe! Can't you see it's all lies? It's so loathsome—every word! And so cheap—so cheap and mean!"

As she spoke, his eyes were rapidly scanning the report he still had in his hands. Again she noticed how tired he was. He looked up at her:

"I know it is! But why didn't you treat it like that? Why did you try to make her keep quiet? Weren't you trying, when I came in?"

"No! No! It was just her odious trick—her pretending!"

"Pretending? How about you? Why did you pretend, when I brought Dwight here, that you'd never laid eyes on him before? Had you or hadn't you? Careful, now! Fanny says it is all here!"

"I'll explain in one word!"

"What's the word? Say it, please—and clear this up!"

She was breathing hard, frightened, her mind in a whirl. Oh, to be able to think clearly! Use a little common sense!

"Just a minute!" she gasped. "You'll see in a minute—"

"I see a good deal! It's right in your eyes! What are you looking so scared about? And what did she say about my being old? I am old—and you're young, young! And a beauty—just the kind for Dwight! Don't I know of his love affairs? Wasn't he at it way back in Paris? Hasn't he been—ever since?"

"Be careful, Joe," she cried angrily. But in his condition, nerves on edge, he paid no heed and went rapidly on:

"I'm just a business man! And you've made me feel your contempt for all that! And he's a musician, he's different—he has exactly what you want! So you went to his studio twice a week—for months and months—without letting me know—although he was a friend of mine! And you went to the Ritz and the opera! And then I brought him here to dine! How you two must have smiled at each other—when I wasn't looking!"

"Joe! Joe!"

"You lied to me, didn't you, when he came? You say you'll explain it in a word! Well, what's the word? I'm waiting!"

"There isn't any!" Her face was white. "I don't care to explain to you now!" she cried. He looked at her. She could see he was trembling, and she nearly changed her mind. But her anger came again. "I won't!" she thought. "Not tonight!"

"Then you and I are through, you know," he said very huskily. He turned and went into the hall, and a moment later the outer door closed. Ethel sat down and stared blankly.

"I acted like an idiot!"

As she sat there she grew furious with herself for having bungled so. Why hadn't she explained to him? Why hadn't she simply told him her plan for giving him back his friends? All at once she could hear herself saying what she should have said to Joe:

"I may have been wrong about it, Joe, but I thought the best way to bring you back to all the things you used to love was to let you think you were doing it. So I let you and Dwight come together alone. I kept in the background, as I did about getting you into that club of yours. I was afraid to show my hand." On and on she talked to him. Oh, how simple and convincing, strong, and sensible and true.

"Why didn't you say it, you little fool? You acted like a scared young girl found out in doing something wrong!" She was ready to cry, but checked herself. "At least don't be a baby now. What are you to do about it?" She bit her lip. Now it was too late. She had made it worse—a hundred times! All at once she rose and began to walk. "Oh, rubbish!" she thought, impatiently. "You're not to give up, when everything else in your whole life was going so perfectly splendidly! * * * Why, of course. That's it. I'll call up Nourse, and have him come and explain to Joe how I went to him at the very start."

With a swift feeling of relief Ethel went to the telephone.

"Mr. Nourse is out of town."

"Oh, yes. Thank you. I'd forgotten. When do you expect him back?"

"Not until the end of the week."

As Ethel hung up the receiver she felt a little faint and queer. When Joe came back this evening she would have to face him alone! In vain she angrily told herself that it only needed common sense. The picture of his tired face, nerves all on edge, rose in her mind. The way his jealousy had flared up! No, it would not be easy! She might even—fail with him! At the thought, a foolish panic came. More walking was required. * * * She heard Susette beginning her supper, and she went in and sat with the child. And at first that worked out very well. Soon she was smiling and listening to the ceaseless chatter of the small girl. But suddenly Ethel exclaimed to herself.

She jumped up in a frightened way and went into her bedroom. She threw herself sobbing on the bed—but in a few minutes regained control with an effort and lay there motionless.

The very best she could hope was to make Joe half believe her, she thought. And that would mean she would have to drop Dwight and all chance of meeting those people he knew. She would live with a Joe so suspicious that she would be under his friend, Fanny Carr. "She'll be my friend, and bring me in touch with whatever other people she likes. I'll have to be nice to them—every one. And I'll live her life. Amy's life." She looked at the large photograph over on Joe's chiffonier. "Perhaps after all I shall be like her. How do I know what she was at my age? As I grow older, all hemmed in, why not stop caring for anything else?

"Oh, now do let's be sensible!" With an impatient movement of her lithe beautiful figure Ethel was up off the bed and walking the room with grim resolution in her brown eyes. Soon she was much quieter. She felt the warm youth within her rise. There must be a way! So far, so good. But the moment she tried to think what way, again at once she was off her ground. What could she do or say to Joe? Her failure to manage him that afternoon had shaken her confidence in herself. Ethel was only twenty-five, and now she felt even younger than that. All at once in a sickening way her courage oozed; she felt herself ignorant and alone. Why did not Joe come back, she asked. Was he going to stay away all night? And if he did, what would it mean? She remembered what he had said when he left: "Then you and I are through, you know." All right, then what was he going to do? "I don't even know how a man goes about it, if he wants to get a divorce!" And panic seized her as before.

"I can't do this all by myself! I can't talk to him as I've got to talk—not till I know just what to say! I bungled it so! I need sound advice! Oh, for somebody to help me!" She thought of Dwight, but she would not go near him! She loathed the very sight of him now! Why had not he told her of those other affairs of his that could rise in this way against herself? Why had he allowed her to do those few little daring things, which looked so cheap and disguising in the detective's typed report? And besides, if she did want to see him, could she, without being watched by some wretched detective? For the whole town seemed bristling with detectives and police. And the city of New York felt cold. As she lay on her bed, a sudden gay laugh from a neighboring window recalled to her mind that night long ago, her first in New York, when she had listened excitedly and thought of all the stories here, both sad and comic.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW.)

DREAMLAND ADVENTURES

NO WORK AND ALL PLAY

By DADDY

(The magic rug carries Peggy, Billy, Balky Sam, Lonesome Bear and Johnny Bull to Persia, where they save the lovers, Astara and Prince Bashur, from being parted. The rug then takes them all to the Isle of Play, from which they drive a band of Turkish pirates. All this was told last week and the week before.)

CHAPTER I

The Two-Finger Sign

FAR out at sea the sun shone on a white sail. It was the ship of the fat Turks fleeing from the Isle of Play. Fast it sped through the foaming waters, but not fast enough to please the sore and sorry pirates. They had come boldly and proudly to steal fair brides; now their only thought was to get away as speedily as possible from the dreadful spotted plague. They had been badly fooled by Peggy's trick, which was to paint the islanders with berry juice until every one appeared sick with the measles or smallpox.

The islanders danced with joy as they watched the white sail grow smaller and smaller. Every one was happy, the brides and their lovers being the happiest of all.

All thanked Peggy and Billy for coming to the rescue. They thanked Johnny Bull for biting the pirates, Lonesome Bear for squeezing them, and Balky Sam for kicking them into the sea. They even thanked Whiffa, guardian of the rug, for bringing the magic rug to the island, although Whiffa didn't deserve any thanks, for he would have run away when danger came if Peggy and Billy hadn't made him stay.

Astara, the fair Persian maiden, was thankful, too, and her lover, Prince Bashur.

In the midst of the joyous dance one handsome island boy leaped to the top of a rock and held up his hand. He was Gala, the boy king of the Isle of Play. His hand was clenched, with two fingers sticking up. It was a signal to the islanders. With a glad cry, they answered with a like cry, and dragging Peggy, Billy, Astara and Prince Bashur with them, they raced down the hill to the edge of the sea. Whiffa, Balky Sam, Lonesome Bear and Johnny Bull followed.

On the beach, Gala, the boy king, again gave the signal, and the islanders rushed into the water. Gala held up two fingers to Peggy and Billy and motioned toward the sea.

Peggy was puzzled, but Billy laughed. "It is the swimming sign," cried Billy. "The boy king wants us to go swimming." True enough it was the swimming sign—the same sign used by boys in America.

Whiffa and the animals accepted the invitation to swim, but Peggy and Billy held back. They had no bathing suits.

Neither did the islanders have bathing suits, but as they were dressed in grasses and seaweed they didn't need any special clothes for bathing. Gala, the boy king, saw the trouble of Peggy and Billy and gave orders to his subjects. The boy islanders dragged Billy one way, and the girl islanders dragged Peggy the other way. In less time than it takes to tell the two were dressed in seaweed bathing suits, just like the islanders. Then they plunged into the surf for a wild frolic amid the big rolling waves.

Peggy and Billy looked for Astara and Prince Bashur, but the lovers had wandered away by themselves and were happy just sitting under a tree and talking.

The islanders quickly washed off all the berry stains which had made them look as if they had spotted plague and then they were very fine looking folks indeed.

When they grew tired of playing in the surf, they lay upon the sand and built sand forts. Peggy was enjoying herself immensely, when suddenly she saw a strange creature coming toward her across the sand. It was a giant turtle, and it looked very fearsome.

"Help!" cried Peggy.

"Ho, ho!" answered Gala, the boy king. "I'll show you sport!" and he leaped upon the back of the giant turtle. Away waddled the turtle toward the ocean, giving Gala a fine ride, but it was a ride that soon was to lead to trouble.

(Tomorrow will be told how the turtle almost runs away with the boy king.)

THE GUMPS—Carp Caviar Just Holding Its Own Today

By Sidney Smith

PETEY—A Day's Pleasure

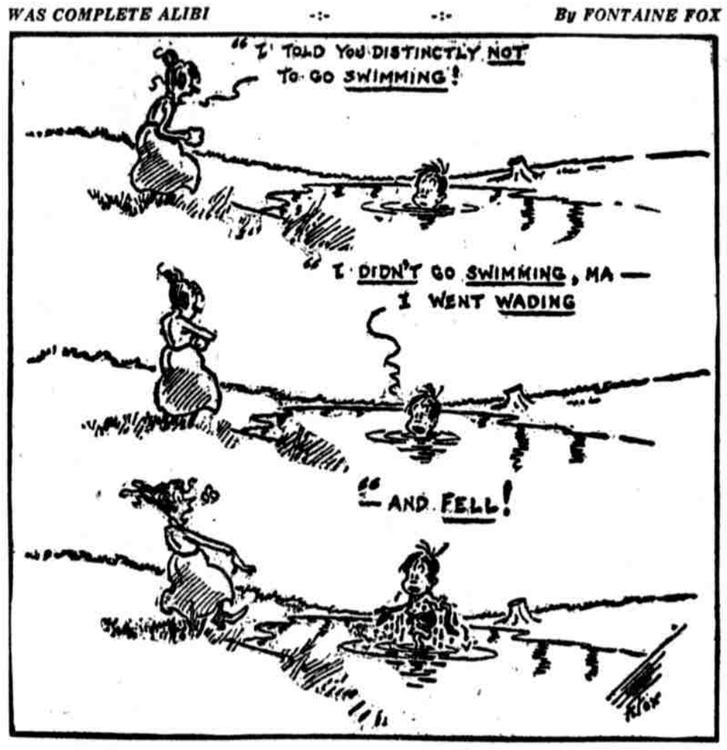
By C. A. Voight

The Young Lady Across the Way

The young lady across the way says she considers it a pretty poor recommendation of a baseball team to say that it excels on the attack, and if they can't win without assaulting their opponents they'd better lose.

WAS COMPLETE ALIBI

By FONTAINE FOX



SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—The Lady Could at Least Use Varnish

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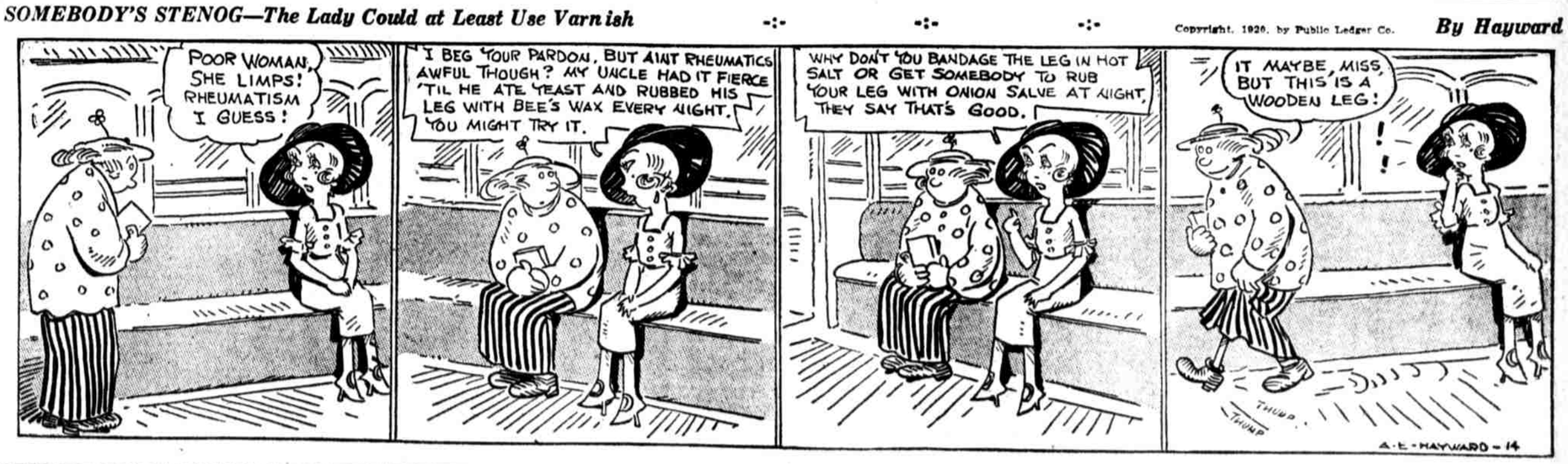
By Hayward



"CAP" STUBBS—Who's Afraid?

By Edwina