

BACHELOR HUSBAND

By RUBY M. AYRES

Author of "Richard Chatterton & Co."
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THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Marie Chester and Christopher Feathers were raised together, and when her father died they married; she because she loved him and he because he didn't love anybody else, and she could use the money the arrangement brought him. On their honeymoon she learns the truth and tells him to pay her the life of a Bachelor Husband as his friends expected. A few days later Marie, known as Marie Chester, a friend of her husband, Feathers, a friend of her husband, Feathers, on returning home is saddened at Chris' moroseness, but at her own persuasion she goes to see Mrs. Heriot, a power to sway him. Chris Heriot is St. Andrews for golf with his companions, leaving her disconsolate. In a motorship through the country with the faithful Feathers she lets him know some of her hurt and she goes to the country and stays with Mrs. Heriot until she has a feeling toward Chris. They have a glorious day married only by meeting Mrs. Heriot on the way and she is going toward Chris. They have a glorious day married only by meeting Mrs. Heriot on the way and she is going toward Chris. They have a glorious day married only by meeting Mrs. Heriot on the way and she is going toward Chris.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

"YOU can go if you will promise to come with me on Sunday." She looked up. "Why are you so anxious for my company all at once?" He frowned. "It looks so—so rotten, our never getting together. Feathers is always getting sly digs in at me about it, and it's as if there is any real reason; we have always been good friends, Marie Celeste, until lately." So it was not that he wanted her. It was just that Feathers had commented on the fact that they were so seldom together, and she knew how Chris hated to be talked about with Feathers with a little warts. It seemed an eternity since she had seen him or felt the strong grip of his hand, and quite suddenly she made up her mind. "Very well, I will come." Chris brightened immediately. "Thank you, Marie Celeste. I shan't tell Feathers; it will be a pleasant surprise to him." This was a little notice, as she went on arranging the flowers with hands that were not quite steady. She did not expect to enjoy herself accompanying Chris. She hated him, and she knew she would get out of everything and unwanted, and she knew this had been the determining factor—she would see Feathers.

She wore her prettiest frock on Sunday, and turned a deaf ear to Miss Chester's lamentations that it would be spoiled. "The roads are so dusty—wear something that can't be spoiled, my dear child." "I'll take a cloak," Marie said. She was conscious of a little feeling of nervousness as she drove away with Chris. "I'm going to pick Feathers up at his house on Sunday." "He's got rooms in Albany street, you know." "Yes, he told me." Her heart was beating fast as they drew up at the house, and she kept her eyes steadily before her. She got out of the car and rang the doorbell violently. "It was opened by Feathers himself, ready to start and with his golf bag slung over his shoulder. "Ten minutes late, you miserable blighter," he began, then stopped, and his face seemed to tighten as he looked at Marie. "How do you do, Mrs. Lawless?" He went forward and shook hands with her formally. "This is a pleasant surprise," he said quietly. "Well, don't waste time—get in." Chris struck in hurriedly. He took his hat and coat and drove on. Marie felt strained and nervous. She tried hard to think of something to say. She knew it would be the most natural thing in the world for her to turn and speak to Feathers, but she could not force herself to meet his eyes. "You're very talkative," Chris said with a gasp, looking down at her. He glanced over his shoulder at Feathers. "Was she as quiet as this when you look her out, Feathers?" Feathers laughed, and made some evasive answer. He tried not to look at Marie, but his eyes turned to her again and again. It seemed a lifetime since they had met, and it filled him with unreasonable anxiety to see her sitting by his side as once she had sat by his, and to know that she belonged to Chris—irrevocably.

It had cost him a tremendous effort to keep away from her. Chris had asked her to the house a dozen times since his return, but he had always managed to avoid going. What was the use? He had had his little hour of life. There was nothing more to hope for. Mrs. Heriot was out in the road looking for them when they drew up at the door. A faint shadow crossed her face when she saw Marie, though she was smiling in her welcome. "And Mrs. Lawless, too? How delightful—and how perfectly splendid you are looking, Chris!" Chris walked on with her to the inn, and for a moment Marie and Feathers were left together. They both tried to think of something to say, but even ordinary conversation seemed difficult. It was only when Marie's coat slipped from her arm and they both stooped to recover it, that for an instant their eyes met, and she broke out, as if by force of habit, with her usual words. "It is nice to see you again, Mr. Dakers." "It is nice to see you again, Mrs. Heriot." "You are very kind, Mrs. Lawless," and then, with a desperate attempt to change the subject, "Chris looks well, doesn't he?" "Yes." She looked at him resentfully, but something in his face soothed the soreness of her heart, for there was a hard unsmilingness in his eyes, and a bitter fold to his lips. "He is not happy, any more than I am," she thought, and wondered why. She sat next to him at lunch, and Mrs. Heriot and her sister took the whole of the conversation between them. They talked of golf till Marie's head reeled, and Feathers interrupted at last. "This is not very interesting to you, Mrs. Heriot, is it?" "Mrs. Heriot laughed. "Mrs. Lawless ought to learn to play. Why don't you teach her, Mr. Dakers?" She really ought to play." "I'm afraid I should never be any good at it," Marie answered. "I should walk far, and it seems to me that

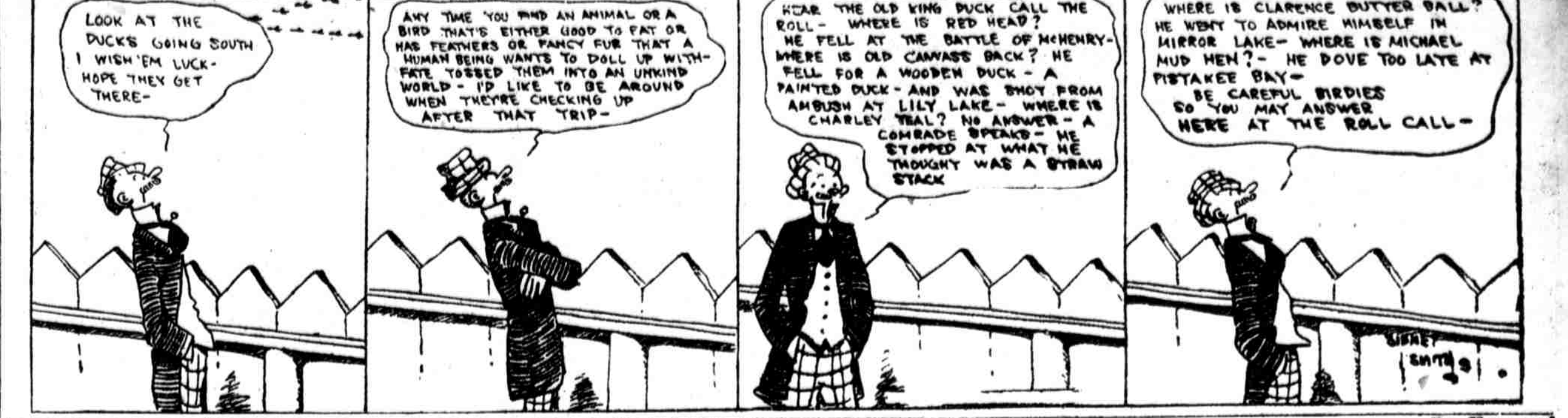
you spend all the time walking round and round." Mrs. Heriot looked at Chris. "Your wife is a vandal," she told him. "I am surprised that you have not made her into more of a sports-woman." He would have spoken, but she ran into his arm here ten days ago? Wasn't it queer? And what do you think that silly Mrs. Costin thought? Why, that Mrs. Lawless was Mr. Dakers' wife! We had such a laugh over it, didn't we?" she appealed to her sister. Marie had flushed crimson. She looked appealingly across at her husband, and was stunned by the look of anger in his eyes—anger with her, she knew. With a desperate effort she pulled herself together. "I wonder if people thought any of the women Chris played golf with in Scotland was his wife?" she said. Mrs. Heriot resumed with laughter. "That's the first time I've even seen you hit back," she cried, clapping her hands. "You dear, delightful child." Feathers pushed back his chair and rose. "Are we obliged to waste all the day here?" he asked. "I thought the main object was to play golf." Mrs. Heriot followed him with alacrity, and her sister attempted to follow. "What are you going to do?" she asked. "You'll find it very tiring walking round with us, I'm afraid; the sun is so hot." "I should like to come," Marie said. "You would like me to, wouldn't you, Chris?" "My dear child, please yourself, and you will please me." He tried to make his voice pleasant, but to Marie, who knew him so well, there was an underlying current of angry bitterness. Was he jealous because of that remark about Feathers? she wondered, and laughed at herself. Chris had never been jealous of any one or anything in his life. "I shall come then," she said, and walked out of the room. But before they had got half-way round the course she was tired out, and had to admit it. There were hardly any trees for shelter, and the sun blazed down relentlessly on the dry grass. Mrs. Heriot and Chris were playing together and a little ahead, and Marie said to Feathers: "I'm going to stay here and rest. Please go on, and I will walk back to the clubhouse directly." They were passing a little group of trees. "It will be cool in the shade here," she added. Mrs. Heriot's sister called to them. "Now then, you two! What are you waiting for?" "You'd better have my coat to sit on," Feathers said. "Yes, I know it's hot, but there's heavy dew at night and the grass may be damp, and you don't want to take any risks." He had been playing without his coat, and he handed it to her before he went on to join his partner. Marie sat down in the shade. Her head ached and she was glad of the rest. She let Feathers' coat lie on her lap listlessly. What did it matter if she caught cold or not? Certainly nobody cared, because of her. The others had gone on over a rise in the ground and out of sight before Chris noticed that Marie was not with them. He called out to Feathers, "Where is Marie?" "She was tired—she is going back to the clubhouse when she has rested." Mrs. Heriot laughed as she walked on by Chris' side. "Mr. Dakers is very devoted," she said softly. "Devoted!" Chris echoed the word blankly. "Devoted to what?" he asked. She raised her eyes and lowered them again immediately. "To your wife, I mean," she said. "To—my—wife!" She gave a little affected laugh. "My dear Chris, don't pretend to be surprised when every one down at the hotel noticed it, even on your honeymoon. Why, Mrs. Lister ever asked me which of you was her husband—you or Mr. Dakers. So silly of her, of course, but it shows how people notice things. You know I always think that when a man dislikes women, as Mr. Dakers has always professed to do, in the long run he is bound to be badly caught."

Chris turned on her furiously. "I think you forget you are speaking of my wife," he said. She flushed scarlet. "My dear boy, I meant nothing against her. I know as well as you do that there is nothing in it, on her side at all. I only meant that Mr. Dakers." "Dakers is my friend. I would rather not discuss him, if you have no objection." She saw that she had gone too far, and relapsed into silence. They both played badly for the remainder of the game, and lost the match. They were rather a silent party as they walked back to the clubhouse. Feathers looked round quickly. "Mrs. Lawless is not here," he said to Chris. Chris threw his clubs into a corner. "No; I'll go and find her," he said, and walked out again into the sunshine. Better for both that the word should be spoken, Feathers thought, if one must be broken. Marie sat lost in thought for a long time after the others had gone on. It was very peaceful out there on the links, and today there was hardly anybody about. She wondered why it was that, no matter how hard she tried, she always seemed to find herself left alone and out of everything. Did the fault lie in her own temperament, or was it merely that she was not physically strong enough to enter into things as other women did? She knew that she was totally unsuited to be Chris' wife, and knowing it, wondered why it was she had ever loved him so much; why things so often seemed to happen like that in life, without any apparent reason. In spite of the subtle change in her feelings toward her husband, she never for a moment blamed him. It was Fate—one could not avoid these things, and she found herself wondering if Feathers would have been kinder and less selfish had he found himself in similar circumstances. She looked down at his rough tweed coat lying across her lap. It was well worn and very shabby, much more shabby than any coat of her husband's. She smoothed the rough fabric with gentle fingers. It was odd how blind women were, she thought; odd that an ugly face should so repel them that they never troubled to look beyond it and discover that it is possible for a heart of gold to lie hidden behind blunt features and an ungainly figure. She had made the same mistake herself. She had adored her husband's handsome face and proved to her bitter cost that alone it was unsatisfying and offered nothing in exchange for all her love.

CONTINUED TOMORROW

THE GUMPS—A Duck Going South

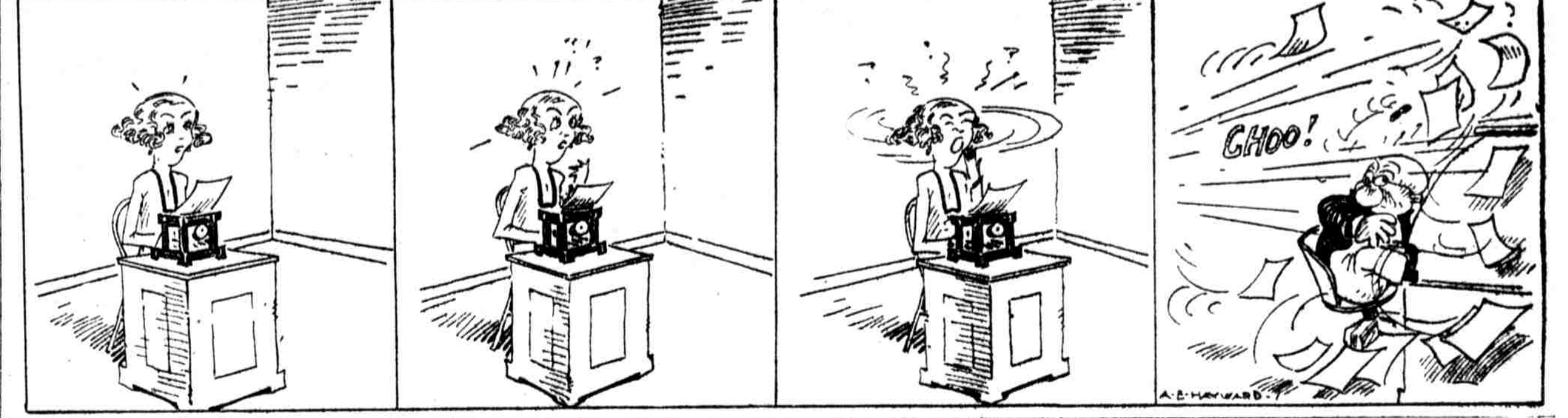
By Sidney Smith



SOMEBODY'S STENOGR—Close That Window!

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By Hayward



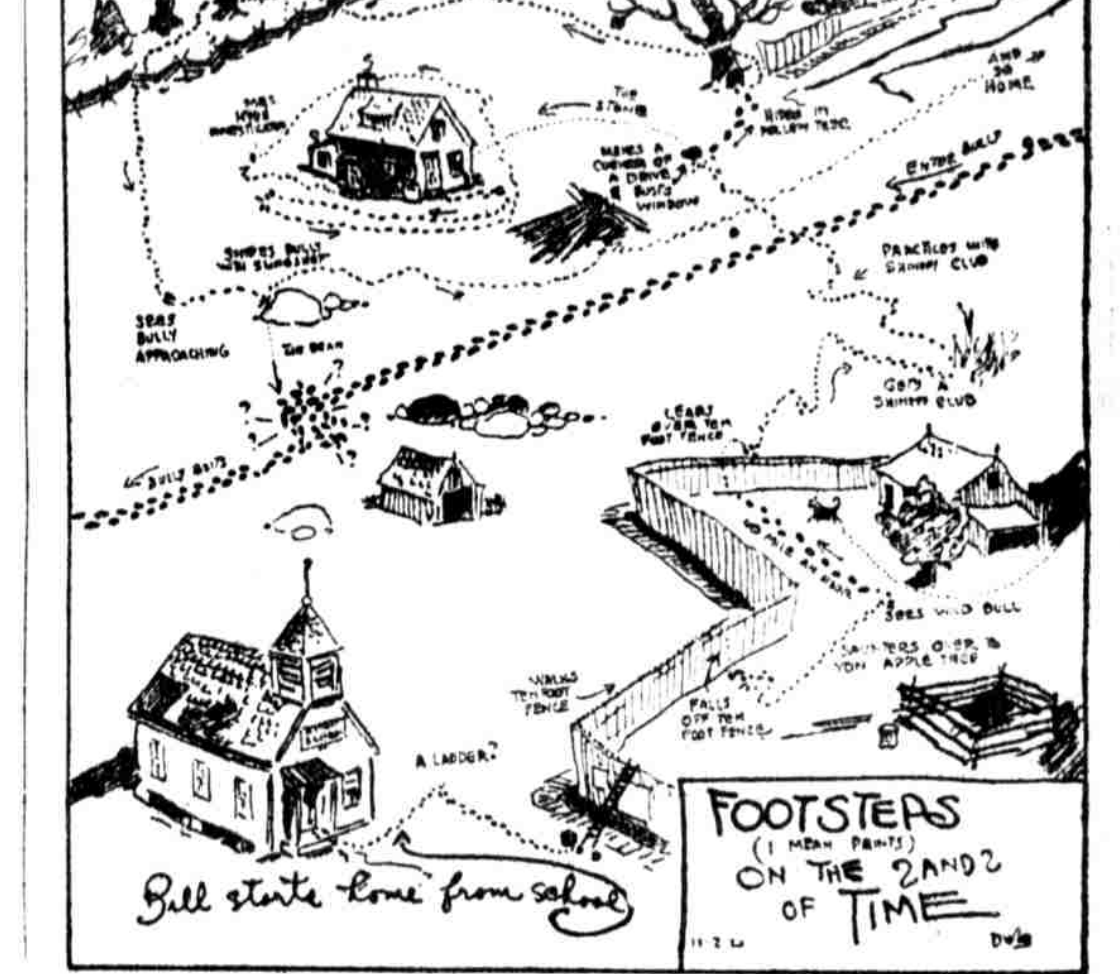
The Young Lady Across the Way

PATNETIC FIGURES

THE YOUNGSTER WHO DROPPED A BRAND NEW LIBRARY BOOK IN FRONT OF AN AUTO WITH THE PROPRIETOR OF THE LIBRARY LOOKING RIGHT OUT THE WINDOW

SCHOOL DAYS

FOOTSTEPS (1 MEN PRINT) ON THE SANDS OF TIME



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GASOLINE ALLEY—Anything to Satisfy the Alley

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