

By Sidney Smith

THE MAN WHO WAS TIRED OF HIS WIFE

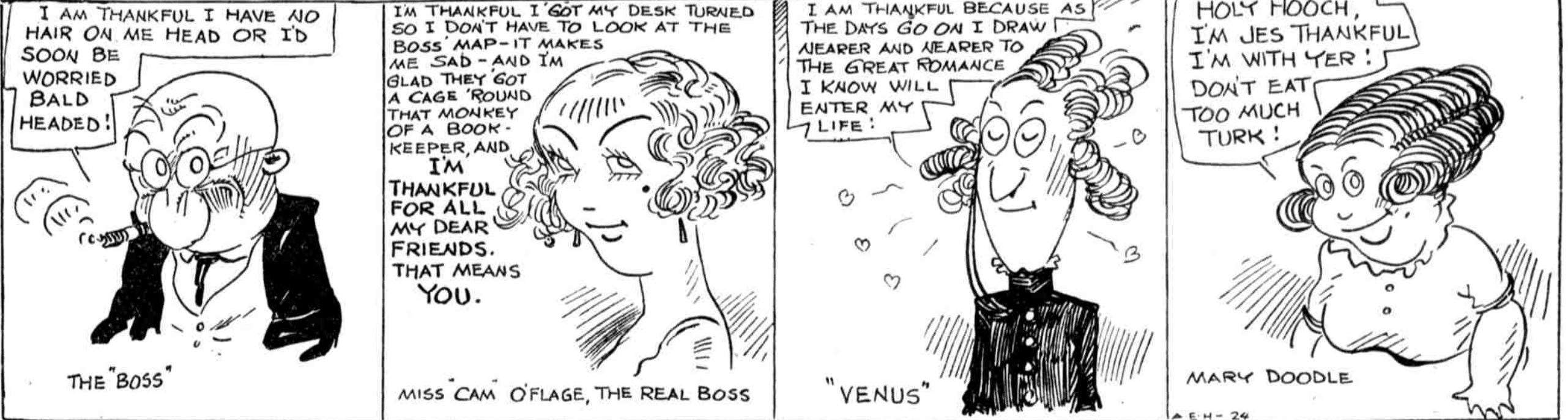
By LUCILLE VAN SLYKE
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THE CHARACTERS
CHARLES SHIRLEY—Forty-seven, was a tobacco broker, bored with life, himself, and particularly with his wife.
BERTHA—His wife, forty-one. Careful, a little age-dodger, absorbed in her own suburban society, and in preserving her beauty.
MARGERY (THE IMP)—Thirty-two, fifteen in spirit, holding the key to the household. Called a "suburban snatcher" by the neighbors, she was the cause of Charles' entry on the suburban scene. She was a little resentful in Bertha's presence, and she developed the habit of adding to Charles' list of things that he had known her in the long past.
THE BOSS—Moved ponderously toward her and stooped to touch the scar on her forehead.
MARY DOODLE—You're little Maggie Sherman!
THE BOSS—I don't live around the corner from you, Debs.
BERTHA—I nodded again.
THE BOSS—And I chased you around that big when you teased me about the twins and yelled, "Wouldn't you either of 'em, not if they were the Queen of Sheba," and down you went.
BERTHA—I wasn't your fault," she assured passionately. "I really didn't care at all. I really liked wearing the landage. And it was the very next after that you let me go along with you caught the big bass down Foley's. You let me carry him home."
THE BOSS—What a whopper he was!" his eyes glistering. "You looked such a carrying him!"
BERTHA—Had a most awful crush on you couldn't have had. You were years and years younger."
THE BOSS—Fifteen," she answered succinctly. "I don't just recall how much older I was than Elaine. But her feet must have been like mine. You were so good to me. You were the person who made life endurable. I never known Aunt Debs. If you'd taken me in for her to handage, I can hear her yet saying, 'My stars, that a lofty brow! And what a carry one!'"
BERTHA—Whatever because of you all these years he asked her eagerly. "We'd wonder and wonder, Aunt Debs. I. Whatever made you go off, saying that silly note, and however did you hide yourself?"
THE BOSS—She shook her head.
BERTHA—"It doesn't matter. It was awfully long. And most of the time I had to. In fact, I've had fun most of the time since the day you first spoke to me."
THE BOSS—"You couldn't possibly remember that. I'll have to tell you. The Robins had just moved in the house and the corner from your feet and I was hanging out their dish towels. I was that forlorn! Hated everything and everybody! And you walked by with the kind of person who'd say a very sorry for anybody who was in hard luck. So I sighed awfully."
BERTHA—"You stopped and said: 'Lo, Cinderella! Didn't the time show up last night?'"
THE BOSS—"I don't believe in prices," I replied.
BERTHA—"You beckoned for me to come over the fence. You just jolled me for the next five minutes and in the end you said, 'Even if you don't believe in prices believe in Bill Shakespeare. It's the boy in all the world's stage.' All you have to do is to remember you were acting pretty well. You've got to be acting that way or I won't take you fishing with me tomorrow. I won't take you any unless you dig all the worms."
BERTHA—"You certainly were a stinky little thing. Aunt Debs thought—" he stopped, embarrassed.
BERTHA—"Aunt Debs thought the Robinsons didn't give me enough to eat," she finished for him. "Well, they didn't. They gave me enough meat and bread. They didn't understand that thirteen-year-old poor relations need help. I gave me lots of biscuits. You did. He shook his head stupidly.
BERTHA—"Can't remember sending you any kind of flowers."
BERTHA—"You called me Madge and Margery instead of Maggie. You taught me to string croquet. You promised me a string of white corals with pink streaks in 'em. I'd learn to swim in five years."
THE BOSS—"And teasingly forgot to give them to you."
BERTHA—"I've learned to swim very well. I never have enough to eat. I've given myself any white corals. I've look so worried about it. I think the time you took me out to your boat, you were laying. Um, I can smell that yet!"
BERTHA—"He leaned forward, scrapping like a kid! All keyed up all the time."
BERTHA—"All longing—" her voice was tender. "We played with me that summer. Right up to the day the Slocums' lawn party. And after that you never played with me again."
BERTHA—"That's funny. I can't remember. How did that happen? Oh, let's see. It was the fall I went to Havana—by, you skipped out yourself before I got to Havana."
BERTHA—"Yes," she agreed quietly. "I skipped out just about a week after that lawn party. I helped pass the ice man and wash the dishes for that party. And all the while I was washing dishes you were out on the side, talking to Bertha. She looked so happy. I hated her! She had a big glow on her face with pink roses and a d'espirt dress and she laughed all the time—you called me over and introduced me to her and she laughed at the way my hair was tied. And the next day you said:
BERTHA—"Gee, that girl that's visiting the Slocums has got the prettiest laugh I ever heard." went up in my room and I had for hours and hours to make myself a pretty laugh—but I can't remember the fire crumbled on the hearth. I thought of them people for a long time."
BERTHA—"Well, Bertha's never lost her laugh. I commented dryly. "Laughing is still the best thing Bertha does. She laughs in on and said: 'I'm glad Margery thumped her fist against her chest. Don't stare at the fire that's going to you. It's about Bertha. It's something you don't understand, and I've a little hard to put in words. You have never either of us been fair to you. I'll have to tell you that I've seen Bertha and talked with her. She came here. I saw her the very next day. I was so surprised that I thought she was the impulsive idiot. I said, 'Oh, how do you do you do?' and she said that she did very well, in fact she looked just luscious! I've all about how I'd been systematically hating her all these years. I've just perfectly thrilled to find some-thing out of the past as lovely as my- self. Well, Bertha didn't recognize me, of course, until I told her she'd met me. Bertha didn't re- cognize me; she remembered the dish- ing. So she looked straight through and past me and said:
BERTHA—"And you're working somewhere this summer?"
BERTHA—"Margery mocked Bertha's carefully modulated tones perfectly; she even

THE GUMPS—High Cost



SOMEBODY'S STENOGR—Also With Thanks From Yours Truly



The Young Lady Across the Way



The young lady across the way says she saw in the paper that the other team kept intercepting on forward passes and for her part she prefers honorable defeat to victory obtained by such unfair methods.

"UP AGAINST IT"



DAD NEVER HAD ANY TOO MUCH ROOM BEHIND THAT STEERING WHEEL AT BEST AND WHEN HE ATE THAT BIG COUNTRY DINNER OUT AT GRANPA'S FARM IT WAS WAY LATE IN THE EVENING BEFORE HE COULD DRIVE BACK TO TOWN.

SCHOOL DAYS



"AMEN."

PETEY—How About Safety Razors?



GASOLINE ALLEY—Just Before the Battle, Mother



CONTINUED TOMORROW