

By Sidney Smith

THE FORTUNE HUNTER

By RUBY M. AYRES

Author of "The Bachelor Husband," "The One Unwanted," etc. Copyright by Wheeler-Syndicate, Inc.

THIS BEGINS THE STORY... Young ones pondering but out of the...

send for your goods and chattels, because you'll stay with us, of course...

He did not wait for a reply; he merely laughed and went out of the room.

The girl stood by the table, her eyes downcast, the sunset glow from the wide-open window all about her...

The Fortune Hunter looked at her helplessly; he had never felt at such a loss in his life.

"Oh, are you really—really glad to be here with me?"

The Fortune Hunter looked past her and swiftly round the room; glad to be in such comfort and luxury...

His eyes wandered to the open window; to the sloping garden beyond and the silvery river, and he drew a deep breath.

"Glad! That's a poor word," he said fervently.

He looked down at her flushing face, read the thought in her eyes, and for a moment he hesitated.

She returned the kiss with soft eagerness, whispering brokenly as they drew apart again.

The Fortune Hunter flushed scarlet; an intolerable sense of shame seemed to choke him.

He had done many questionable things in his life, and felt little compunction.

"It will have to end," he told himself grimly, as he stood and stared at the river.

He had taken many a kiss in his life and thought nothing of it, but this girl was different.

"My name is John Smith," he said deliberately, with cynical memory of that moment in the woods when he had taken the pocketbook from a dead man.

But he was totally unprepared for the stifled cry which broke from the girl's lips, or for the little eager steps she took toward him, her hands outstretched.

"I knew—I knew it was you," she said with a sobbing laugh.

The hot blood beat into the Fortune Hunter's face and for a moment he stood helplessly staring at her; then mechanically he took her hands in his and held them fast.

"I know it was you," she said again, with trembling happiness in her voice.

"And you always said that I would not recognize you," she held back from him at arm's length, scanning his hot face, smiling through her tears.

"Why, you haven't altered so very much," she declared.

"How could you tell me that you love? Oh, and to pretend that you don't know who I was. Oh, John! It seems like yesterday after all, now that you're here again."

She was too excited to notice his silence, and she went on: "You were coming to us, of course, weren't you?"

The Fortune Hunter hesitated for a moment, groping for the words that would leave him free to make his escape and yet not hurt her feelings.

"I wanted to see you at once," he began, then stopped abruptly as if a deep, furious voice called from below, interrupting him.

"Anne! Anne!" called the man below, who evidently had just entered the lower hall.

But the Fortune Hunter, following more slowly, felt no such excitement. Things were beginning to be a bit difficult to manage.

The Fortune Hunter was a shrewd man, but the obvious for gentleman, and troubled no further; so the Fortune Hunter would casually have described him.

The twinkling eyes that peeped out from the rosy, wrinkled face were the shrewdest eyes in the world, and the heavy-lidded, and stumpy, almost boyish waist?

"So, you're the wonderful John Smith," Clem Harding said, as he swung the Fortune Hunter's hand.

"Well, well! I never believed in your nature for the moment, Anne, and I have had over you. Why, only last night—wasn't it, my dear?—I bet her five pounds none of us would ever see you in the flesh; that something that she had said to me from Somerton at the last moment. Ha-ha! I was wrong, and I'll pay my debt gladly."

He stood back, hands thrust into his pockets, and looked the Fortune Hunter up and down with kindly, expansive gaze.

"My clothes don't fit you very well, do they? Where will you send for your own wardrobe? It is, meanwhile, help yourself to my wardrobe. A bit short in the leg, eh? And a bit too big round the waist?"

"They might be a worse fit," he declared, stretching his long arms to show the absurd shortness of the coat-sleeves.

"It was unfortunate, Tommy, falling into the river." He brought the name out boldly.

"I'm more than glad," Clem Harding said gravely.

"You'll do it better if I'm out of the way," he said, he turned to the door, looking back when he reached it to ask: "And your luggage?"

The Fortune Hunter hesitated, and, in spite of himself, the color deepened a little in his bronzed face.

"As a matter of fact, I only came down for the day," he said at last.

THE GUMPS—'Twas the Night Before Christmas

HA! THE DAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND UNCLE SAM HAS BENT THE GUMPS A LITTLE SHOPPING MONEY—SENT TO ANDY AND MIN A THOUSAND DOLLAR BOND AND CHESTER A \$1000 GOLD PIECE—IS THERE REJOICING IN THE GUMP FAMILY? WE'LL TELL THE UNIVERSE—

THE MODERN SANTA CLAUS—MR. GOOD FELLOW—THESE ARE THE DAYS THAT UNCLE SAM GLORIES IN—NOT ONLY DOES HE SEND PRESENTS TO THE GUMPS BUT HUNDREDS FEEL THE CHEERING TOUCH OF HIS BENEVOLENCE—

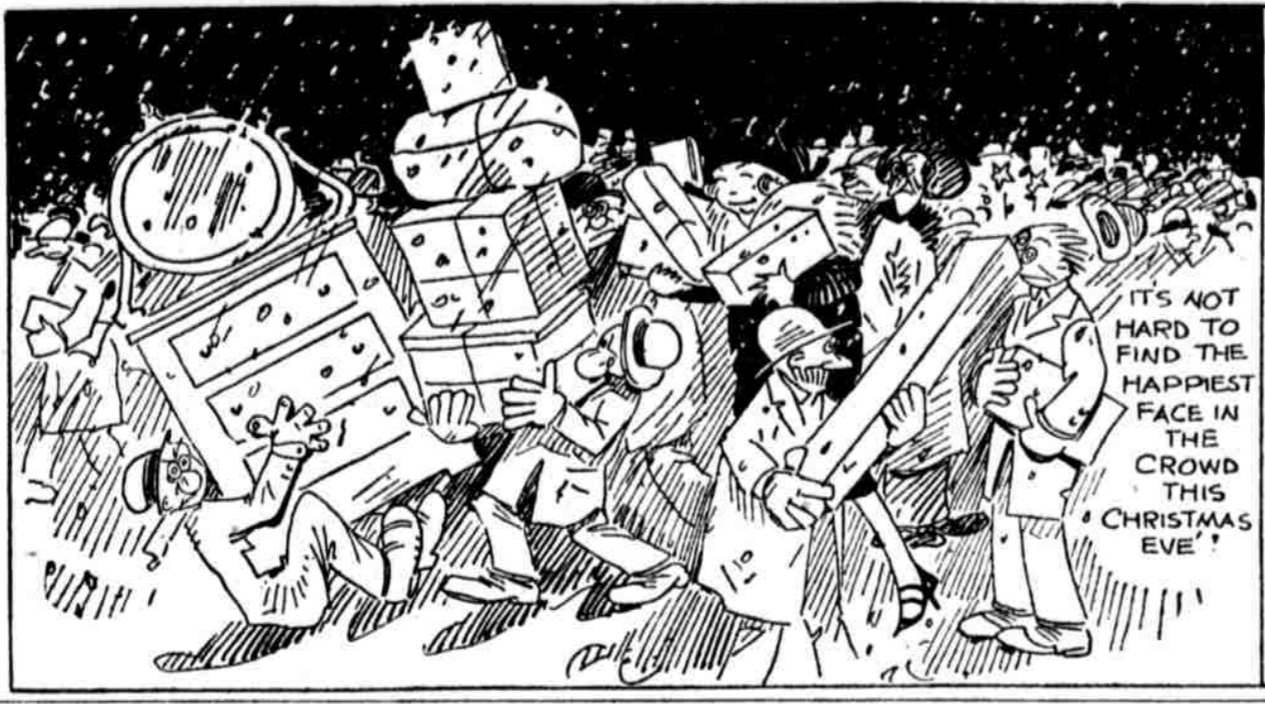


THE LINE-UP FOR CHRISTMAS—MIN, CHESTER, ANDY

WHATEVER THEY MAY THINK OF MRS. ZANDER TODAY—

THE HAPPY SPIRIT OF YULETIDE PERVADES THE GUMP HOME—THEY WISH THE WORLD A MERRY CHRISTMAS—

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Wishing You a Happy Fourth of July



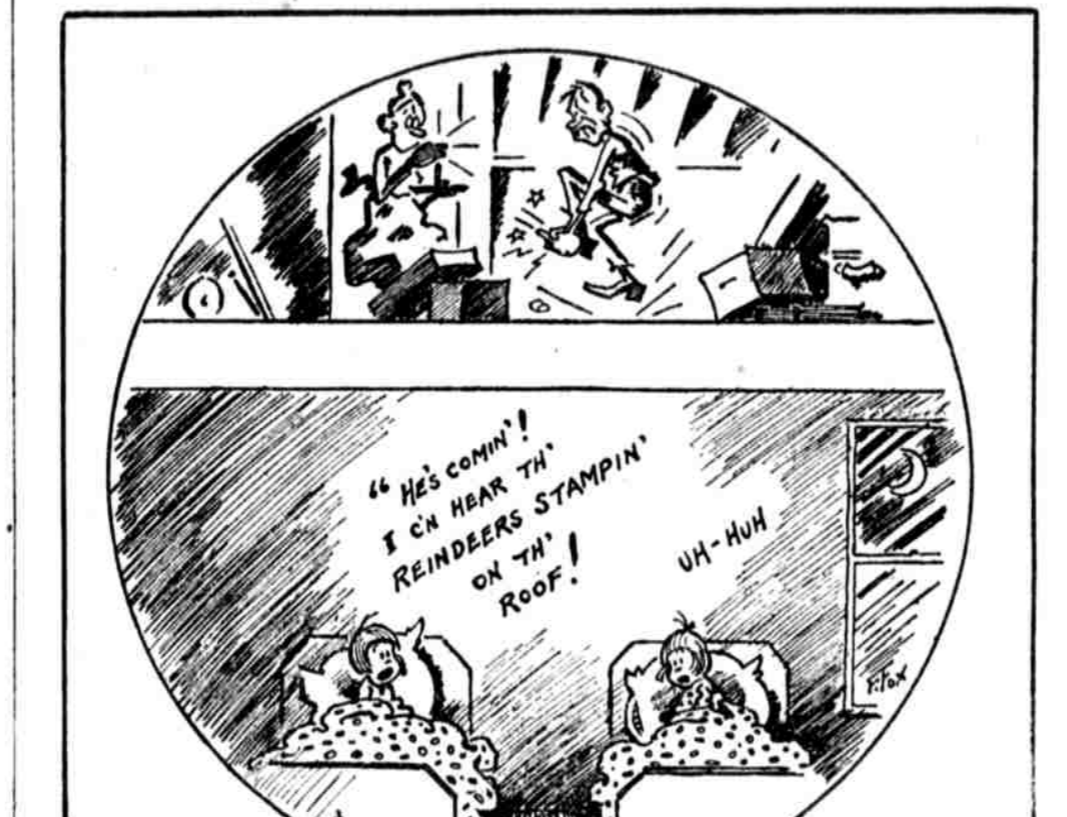
GEE! ALL CHOCOLATE COVERED NUTS! TO MANY DOODLE FROM THE BOSS! THE JOY OF 'VENUS' IS SUPREME. AMONG OTHER NICE THINGS SHE GOT A CARD FROM—???



The Young Lady Across the Way

Dad Goes Up in the Attic After the Toys and Drops a Box on His Toe—By Fontaine Fox

SCHOOL DAYS—By DWIG



The young lady across the way says the United States, England and Japan are the three great naval powers...

"HE'S COMIN'! I CAN HEAR TH' REINDEERS STAMPIN' ON TH' ROOF!"

HOW'D YOU EVER EXPECT HIM TO EVER GET DOWN THAT CHIMNEY? HE'LL NEVER DO HER!

PETEY—From the Heart

GASOLINE ALLEY—Tit for Tat—By King



LOOKS LIKE A REGULAR OLD FASHIONED CHRISTMAS.



MOTHER, WITH SKEEZIX'S, YOUR AND MY STOCKINGS ALL HUNG IN A ROW!

THE SWEET LITTLE FELLOW OUGHT TO HAVE MY STOCKING—IT HOLDS MORE

NOW MOTHER, YOU'RE TIRED YOU GO ON UP TO BED, I'M GOING TO SIT UP AND READ A FEW MINUTES.

THE DEAR SOUL! ALL I WANTED WAS A CHANCE TO FILL UP HER STOCKING!

THE DEAR BOY! HE PACKED ME OFF TO BED JUST LIKE I USED TO DO TO HIM WHEN HE WAS SIX!

ONE HOUR LATER

CONTINUED TUESDAY