

THE DANCING MASTER

By RUBY AYRES

Author of "The Phantom Lover," "A Bachelor Husband," "The One Unwanted," etc.

THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Elizabeth Conyers, a demure country girl, pretty in spite of her old-fashioned, dowdy dressing, is visiting fashionable relatives in London. At a grand ball she is in a conspicuous position. A handsome young man, who has to dance and she has to confess she knows none of the up-to-date steps. He is Pat Royston, and Elizabeth, who is the cousin's wife, is a solid but not very vivacious country lad, who loves her and proposes marriage in her flight. She refuses him and determines to go to London to earn her living by dancing on a legacy of 5000 her uncle left her. She is indignantly taken in by her aunt.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

"I'd Like Some Smart Clothes"

His eyes grew anxious; with all his careful saving, his own capital was very little more than a hundred, and he dreaded lest Elizabeth, with her poor knowledge of the value of money, should be contemplating throwing her legacy away.

"What I should really like," she said slowly, "would be to buy some clothes—really smart clothes." She flushed, meeting his reproachful gaze. "And then go right away somewhere—even if only a week or two—and have a real good holiday. I've never had a real holiday like other people, only just day trips, and—going to my aunt's."

She gave a hard little laugh. "But I'm not going to waste it like that. I can see you think it would be waste, Walter. So I'm going to teach music to earn a living with it."

He echoed her words, not understanding. "Teach yourself! But you know how to cook, how to look after a house. If you were to get somewhere with a nice family—"

Elizabeth shivered. "No, thank you; when I leave here I'm not going to do any more cooking or housework. You see, I'm going to teach dancing."

"Teach—dancing?" Walter echoed. "But—how can you? You don't know these new dances, do you, and they are all different, aren't they, from the ones we know?"

Elizabeth nodded. "Yes—oh, so different! And she thought of that dreadful hour during which she had sat alone on the couch in the ballroom, and tried in vain to escape from her myriad reflections. "So different," she said again. "But I can learn—I can soon learn, I know. He said—told me—some time when I was at my aunt's—that that I was a born dancer, that I could dance like a fairy. So you see! And every one wants to learn nowadays, Walter."

Elizabeth, if you had never gone to London would you have married me?" she asked.

She tried to meet his gaze, but her lids fell, and he saw how her lips trembled when she tried to speak. "I—I don't know... I... oh, I don't understand myself! I can't explain."

He put a hand beneath her chin, raising her downward head. "Elizabeth, is there any one else—any other man—who has cut me out?"

She managed to laugh at that, but it was a shaky little laugh that carried no conviction. "Anybody else?" she echoed. "When I told you that nobody wanted to dance with me—nobody spoke to me, hardly anybody, the whole evening."

"You said that somebody told you you were a born dancer; that some one said you could dance like a fairy. His Elizabeth eyes searched her face. She laughed tremulously. "Oh," she said, with a little catch in her voice, "it was a dancing master who told me that."

But she could not break out into his eyes still, and her anger broke out. "How absurd you are! Questioning me like this. I told you that nobody wanted to dance in London." Her voice sank. "I only wish they had," she added hoarsely.

He hardly seemed to hear. "If you go to London, as you say you mean to do, doggedly, 'it will be the end of everything. I shall never see you again."

"Of course you will! You will come and see me, and I shall come back here—sometimes."

His face whitened. "Once you go you will never come back."

His distress angered her even though she was sorry for him. Now she knew all anxiety to begin the life which she had chosen for herself while she sat waiting for Walter Sneath to show Mr. Junkers out of the house.

to fit herself for his life—that she was going to London where she would, at least, be near him, and perhaps sometimes see him.

She was young and romantic, and Walter Sneath, honest fellow, had never touched her heart.

She was glad when at last he left her; his presence hampered and irritated her; yet when she was alone in her room from courage and high determination began to waver.

Supposing she was a failure! What would she do when all her money had gone and there was no home upon which to fall back?

And the dread of loneliness and an unknown future shook her. During a wakeful night she decided a dozen times to write to Walter Sneath and say that she had changed her mind, but when the morning came she knew it could never be.

She did not love him; she did not want to be his wife. Even the vague terrors of an unknown future were preferable to the monotony which was all she would have in Dillbury.

She went to see Mr. Junkers the next day, and told him of her decision. He listened quietly, the faintest smile on his lips before he said smoothly: "My dear child—do you know that you are not of age?"

Elizabeth flushed. "Not of age? My birthday is next week, and I shall be twenty-one; I can do what I like then."

The look a little nonplussed, and tried reasoning from another standpoint. "It is impossible for you to make your own way in London; you are not in the least fitted to battle with the world. You must at least consult your aunt, and see what she says. She is your only living relative now."

"She does not want to be bothered with me," Elizabeth said proudly. "and I do not want to go to her house again."

But in the end she had to consent to see Mrs. Mason. He told her very strongly that it was her duty to prevent Elizabeth from carrying out her plan.

"She is only a child," he said. "You are her aunt, I have told her that she must come to you—at any rate for a time."

Mrs. Mason did not want Elizabeth. "I cannot afford to keep her," she said plaintively. "I think my brother behaved very badly in not leaving her or us any of his money. Why in the world all that fortune should go to endow some wretched hospital when his own relatives are practically in want I cannot see. He was always selfish; he never cared for any of us."

Mr. Junkers knew the type of woman with whom he had to deal. He cut her short. "Then I may tell your niece that you will receive her?"

"For the present; only for the present," Mrs. Mason said firmly. "Elizabeth must look out for some work. Goodness knows, I have worked hard enough in my day. I suppose, though, she is not fitted for anything but housework."

Mr. Junkers smiled. "She seems to have got some idea in her head that she would like to teach dancing," he said.

Mrs. Mason almost screamed. "Dancing! That girl! She cannot dance! She has no appearance. Heaven! Who will go to her for lessons?"

"Perhaps you can persuade her to change her mind," he said mildly. "She's a little fool," Mrs. Mason said viciously, "but I suppose she will have to come to me for the time being, at all events."

So Elizabeth came.

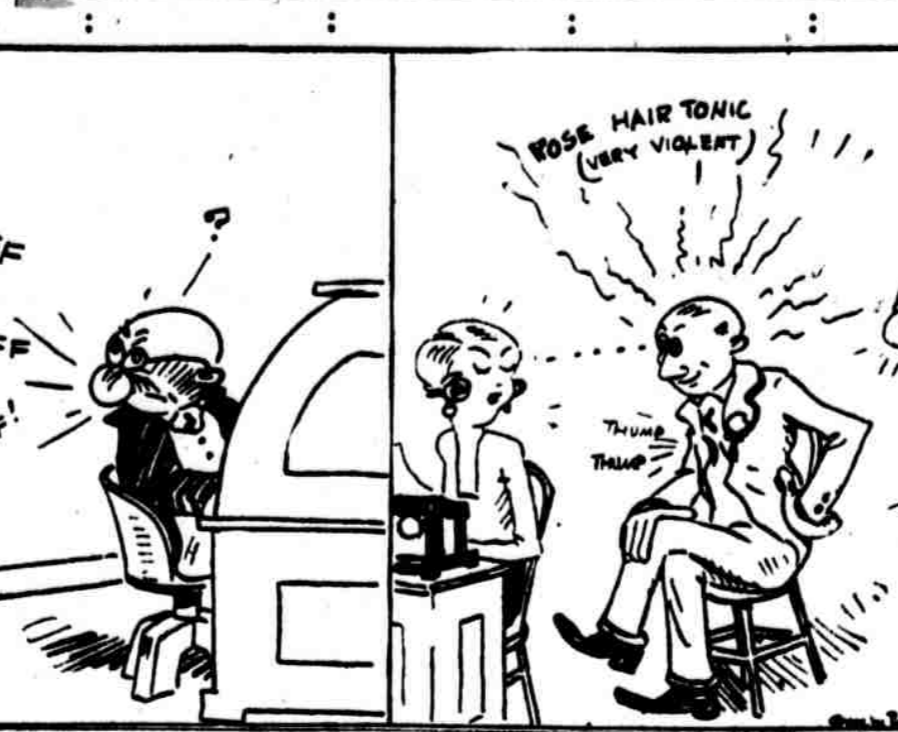
An Unwelcome Guest

Elizabeth went back to her aunt's house on a Thursday afternoon, and in twenty-four hours she was seeking desperately for a means of escape from it.

THE GUMPS—Radio



SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER—Skipped the Old Man



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It was the first time in her life she had ever come to a wifely decision, and it left her rather afraid.

But she did not mean to change her mind to the drugery of a household, and had felt it in every nerve of her body even before Pat Royston showed her a ever turner from her purpose.

A hundred pounds would teach her all it was necessary for her to know, or she would earn her own living as he did, and as thousands of other men and women were doubtless doing at the present time.

At the back of her mind her determination was faintly connected in some vague fashion with Royston, though she could not have explained in what way. He was married, and he had teased her without a look of recognition in his eyes, and yet—

Continued Tomorrow

The Young Lady Across the Way



THE TERRIBLE-TEMPERED MR. BANG



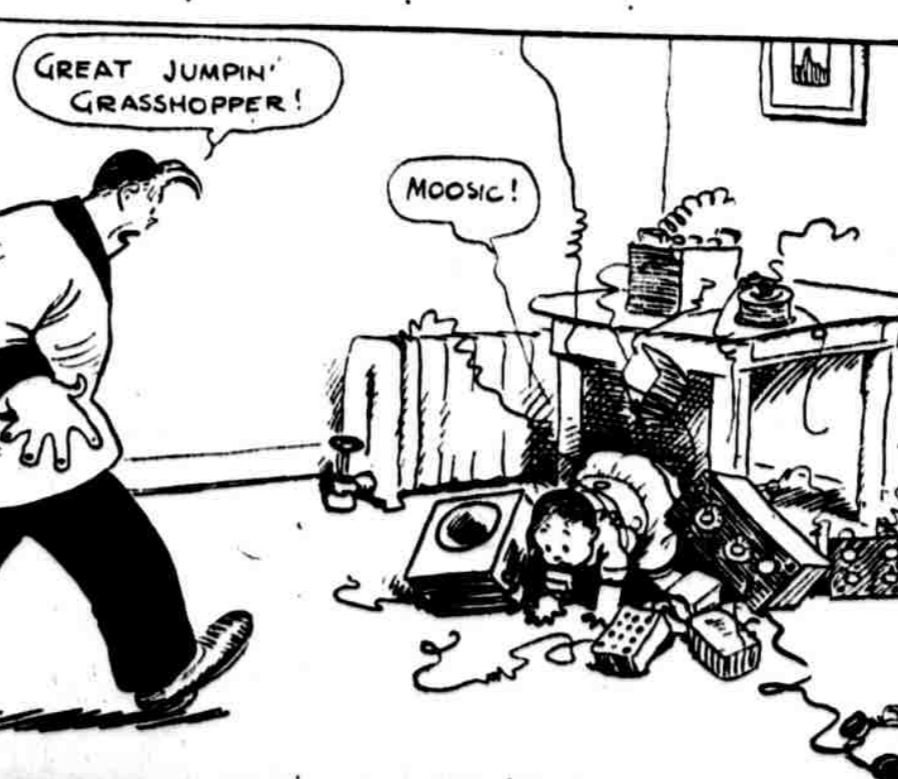
SCHOOL DAYS



PETEY—Silly Stuff



GASOLINE ALLEY—A Bit of Interference, Skeezi



Continued Tomorrow