

THE MYSTERY GIRL

A Detective Story By CAROLYN WELLS Copyright, 1922, by J. B. Lippincott Company. Serialized by Ledger Syndicate.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENT

John Waring, gentleman and scholar, has just won the hotly contested election to the presidency of Coriath College, a small New England college, during the term of his inauguration, he plans to marry Emily Bates, a charming and cultured widow.

"Are You Entirely Happy?"

OPPOSITE the double doors was the great fireplace with high overmantel of carved stone. Each side of the mantel were windows, high and not large. The main daylight came through a great window on the right of the entrance and also from a long French window that opened like doors on the same side.

This French window, giving on a small porch, and the door that opened into the cross hall of the house were the only doors in the great room, save those on cupboards and bookcases.

On the other side of the room, opposite the French window, was a row of four small windows looking into the dining-room. But these were high, and could not be seen through by people on the sunken floor of the study.

The whole room was done in Ciceronian walnut, and represented the ideal abode of a man of letters. The double doors were flanked with two facing bookshelves, the wide window seat was filled with cushions. The French window doors were suitably curtained and the high windows were of truly beautiful stained glass.

The spacious table desk was in the middle of the room, and bookcases, both portable and built in, lined the walls. There were a few good busts and valuable pictures, and the whole effect was one of dignity and repose rather than of elaborate grandeur.

The room was renowned, and all Coriath spoke of it with pride. The students felt it a great occasion that brought them within its walls and the faculty loved nothing better than a session therein.

Casual guests were rarely entertained in the study. Only especial visitors or those worthy of its classic atmosphere found welcome there. Mrs. Peyton or Helen were not expected to use it, and Mrs. Bates had already declared she should respect it as the sanctum of Dr. Waring alone.

The two made their way to the window seat, and as he arranged the soft cushions for her, Waring said, "Don't, Emily, ever feel shut out of this room. As I live now, I've not welcomed the Peytons in here, but my wife is a different proposition."

"I still feel an awe of the place, John, but I may get used to it. Anyway, I'll try, and I do appreciate your willingness to have me in here. Then if you want to be alone, you must just go out."

"I'll probably do that sometimes, dear, for I have to spend many hours alone. You know, I'm not taking the presidency lightly."

"I know it, you conscientious dear. But on the other hand, don't be too serious about it. You're just the man for the place, just the character for a college president, and if you try too hard to improve or reconstruct yourself, you'll probably spoil your present perfection."

"Well nothing would spoil your present perfection, my Emily. I am too greatly blessed to have the great honor from the college—and you, too!"

"Are you happy, John? All happy?" Waring's deep blue eyes fastened themselves on her face. His brown hair showed only a little gray at the temples, his face was not touched deeply by time's lines, and his clear, wholesome skin shined with health.

If there was an instant's hesitation before his reply came, it was none the less hearty and sincere. "Yes, my darling, all happy. And you?"

"I am happy, if you are," she returned. "But I can never be happy if there is a shadow of any sort on your heart. Is there, John? Tell me, truly."

"You mean regarding this trouble that I hear is brewing for me?"

"Not only that; I mean in any direction. Trouble, Emily! With you in my arms! No, a thousand times no! I have you!"

Miss Mystery Arrives Any one who has arrived at the railroad station of a New England village early on a very cold winter night, to find a man waiting on the platform for the train late, no one to meet him, and no place engaged for board and lodging will know the desolation of such a situation.

New England's small railroad stations are much alike, the crowds that slight from the trains are much alike, the people waiting on the platform for the arrival of a train are much alike. But there came into Coriath one night a passenger who was not at all like the fellow passengers on that belated train. It was a train from New York, and the delays were many and long and the train drew into the station shortly after 7 o'clock.

The passenger who was unlike the others stepped down from the car platform, and holding her small suitcase firmly, crossed the track and entered the station waiting room. She went to the ticket window, but found there no attendant. Impatiently she tapped her little foot on the old board floor, but no one appeared.

Undecided as to her next move, she opened the station door just in time to see an old man with long white hair jump into his sleigh and begin to talk fur robes about him.

"He's going to his sleigh—to his sleigh, and he's a little old man," she quoted to herself, and then cried out, "Hey, there, Santa Claus, give me a lift!"

"You engaged for our house?" the head, he thumped up his reins. "Can't take any one not engaged," he called back, "Giddap!"

"Wait—wait! I command you!" through the cold winter air, and Old Salt Adams paused to listen.

"Ho, ho," he chuckled, "you command me, do you? Now, I haven't been commanded for something like fifty years."

"Oh, don't stop to fuss," the girl insisted, angrily. "Don't you see that I'm cold, hungry and very uncomfortable? You have a boarding house—want board—now, you take me in. Do you hear?"

"Sure I hear, but, miss, we've only got a few rooms and they're all occupied or engaged."

"Some are engaged, but as yet unoccupied?" The dark eyes challenged him, and Adams mumbled—"Well, that's about it."

"Very well, I will occupy one until the engager comes along." The wind blew fiercely. It was snowing—little, and the drifts sent feathery clouds through the air. The trees, coated with ice from a recent sleet storm, broke off crackling bits of ice as they passed. The girl looked about, at first curiously, and then timidly, as if frightened by what she saw.

It was not a long ride, and they stopped before a large house, showing comfortably lighted windows and a broad front door that swung open even as the girl was getting down from the sleigh.

"For the land sake!" exclaimed a brisk feminine voice, "this ain't Letty! Who in the earth have you got here?"

"I don't know," Old Salt Adams replied, truthfully. "Take her along, mother, and give her a night's lodging." "But where is Letty? Didn't she come?"

"Now can't you see she didn't come? Do you s'pose I left her at the station? Or dumped her out a long the road? No—since you'll have to take her, she didn't come. She didn't come!"

Old Salt drove on toward the barns, and Mrs. Adams bade the girl go into the house.

The landlady followed, and as she saw the stranger she gazed at her in frank curiosity.

"You want a room, I s'pose," she began. "But, I'm sorry to say we haven't one vacant."

"Oh, I'll take Letty's. She didn't come, you see, so I can take her room for tonight."

"Letty wouldn't like that." "But would. And I'm here and Letty isn't. Shall we go right up?"

Picking up her small suitcase, the girl started and then stepped back for the woman to lead the way.

"Not quite so—if you please. What is your name?"

As the landlady's tone changed to a sterner infection, the girl likewise grew dignified.

"My name is Anita Austin," she said, coldly.

"Where are you from?" "New York City."

"What address?" "Please Hotel."

By this time the strange dark eyes had done their work. A steady glance from Anita Austin seemed to compel all the world to do her bidding. At any rate, Mrs. Adams took the suitcase, and without a further word conducted the stranger upstairs.

She took her into an attractive bedroom, presumably made ready for the absent Letty.

"This will do," Miss Austin said, calmly. "Will you send me up a tray of supper? I don't want much, and I prefer not to go down to dinner."

"Land sake, dinner's over long ago. You want some tea—'n' bread—'n' butter, 'n' preserves, 'n' cake?"

"Yes, thank you, that sounds good. Send it in half an hour."

Miss Mystery Baffles Speculation To her guest Mrs. Adams showed merely a face of acquiescence, but once outside the door, and released from the spell of those eyes, she remarked to herself, "For the land sake!" with great emphasis.

"Well, what do you know about that?" Old Salt Adams cried, when, after she had started him on his supper, his wife related the episode.

"I can't make her out," Mrs. Adams said, thoughtfully. "But I don't like her. And I won't keep her tomorrow, you'll have to get over to Bolton."

"Just as you say. But I thought her kinda interesting looking. You can't say she isn't that."

"Maybe so, to some folks. Not to me. And Letty'll be gone tomorrow, so that girl'll have to get out of the room."

Meanwhile "that girl" was eagerly peering out of her window.

She tried to discern which were the lights of the college buildings, but through the still lightly falling snow, she could see but little.

"Corinth," she whispered, "Oh, Corinth, why do you hold for me? What fortune or misfortune will you bring me? What fortune or misfortune shall I bring to others? Oh, Justice, Justice, what crimes are committed in thy name!"

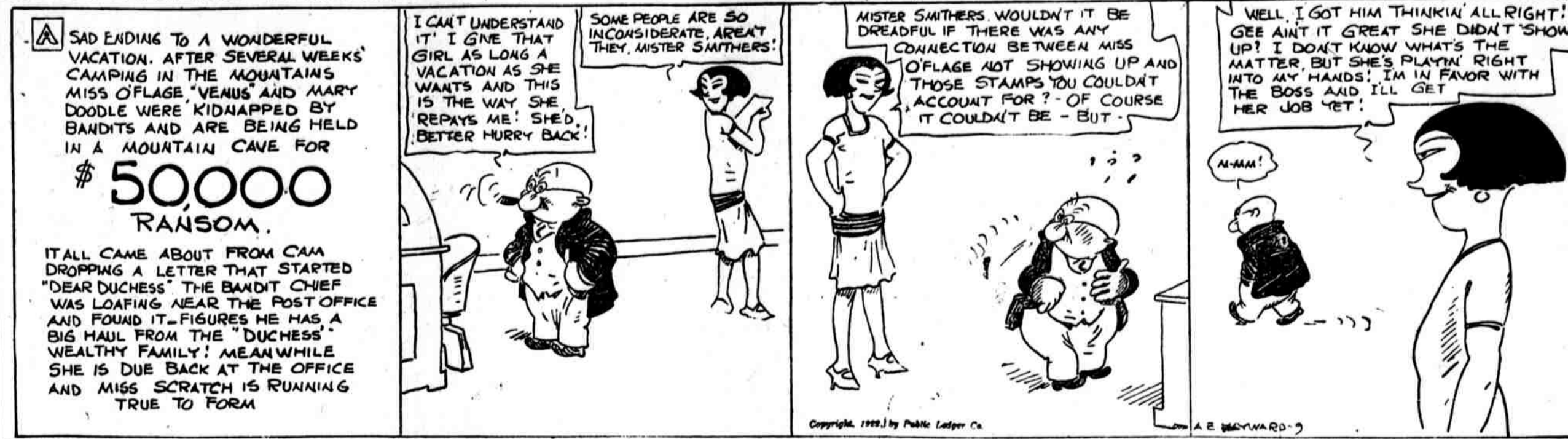
The next morning Anita appeared in the dining-room at the breakfast hour.

Mrs. Adams scanned her sharply, and looked a little disapprovingly at the short, scant skirt and slim, silken legs of her new boarder.

THE GUMPS—On to Washington



SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER—Miss Scratch



The Young Lady Across the Way



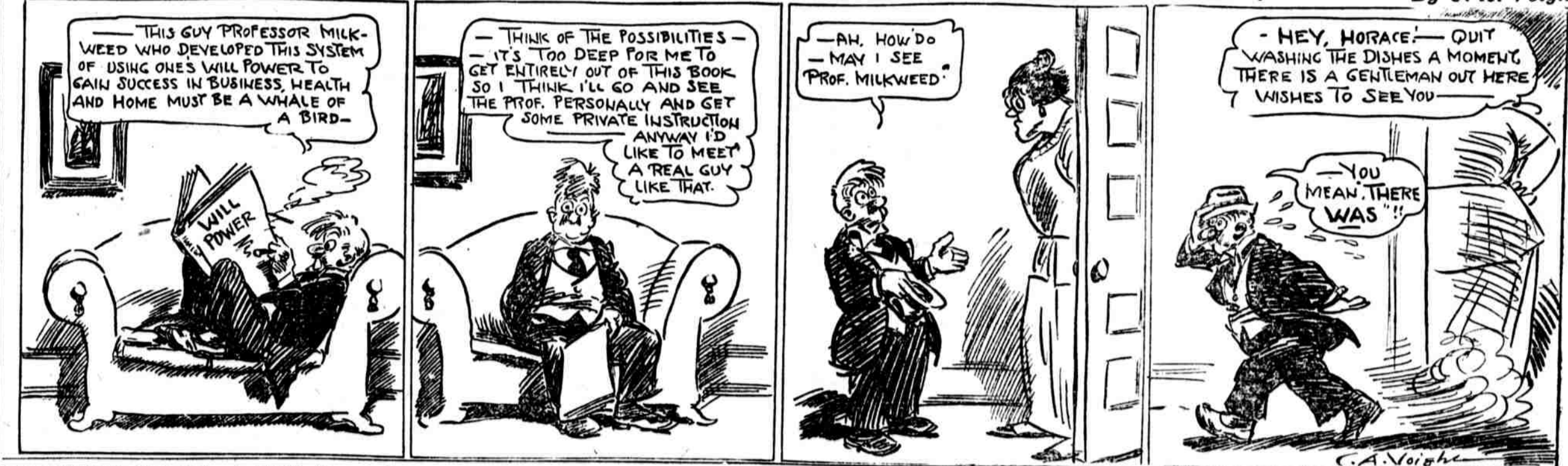
OLD MAN THOMAS AND HIS FAMOUS PIPE



SCHOOL DAYS



PETEY—Looks Like the Prof's Wife Wrote It



GASOLINE ALLEY—A Little Souvenir



CONTINUED MONDAY