

# The Subconscious Courtship

By BERTA RUCK

**WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY**  
**CLOVER ELPHINSTONE**, charming young widow, who has inherited a business, harassed by relatives and neighbors who want to spend her money, decides to marry a "husband for convenience," to fend off "the harpies."  
**MAJOR HARRY CARMICHAEL**, a World War veteran, man of personality, a business man who has invented a new device, to finance which he agrees to marry Clover's "strictly business" proposition.  
**ROSEMARY MEADOWS**, Clover's cousin, a pretty girl of the sixties.  
**MR. MEADOWS**, her father, who has persuaded Clover in adversity and is favored with favors.  
**SANDAL**, younger daughter, a beauty.  
**MR. HOLT**, big, good-natured chap, helpfully in love with Rosemary.

"Look a little more engaged," he said. The very softness of his tone made his hit the speech and manner of a gentleman, so that she could not even to herself that he was ever "engaged" in his sparring with her. To this last shaft her only answer was to glance at the tall figure beside her in dark overcoat, white muffer and top hat and to exclaim impatiently, "Oh! But how stupid of you to forget!"

"Stupid?" he took up, puzzled. "What have I forgotten?" "Didn't I tell you that this was a fancy dress dance, and you've come in evening dress?" "I am so sorry, but you always understood the fancy dress was optional at these affairs, especially if one was not going to dance at all. Anyhow, I was wearing some other sort of costume to come in."

"Well, they won't let you in like that," he said. "Do you think not?" he returned. "I could not help being a little amused with her. She foresaw difficulties, such as whether or no he would be allowed in to the galleries in ordinary clothes, and they things that—But this was one of the astounding things about the young woman—she simply had not foreseen a title of the consequences of this evening's announcement. They were to be engaged, and then they were to have one standard of "engagement" for private use and one for public. There was to be no overlapping, and no forgetting, and no awkwardness, and no mingling of themselves away; no merging of their private coldness into their public politeness."

"Did she realize? Was that beginning to trouble her a little at last, or was she really only annoyed because he wasn't in fancy dress?" "Well, yes," he suggested, "look in at Charleston's and try to raise a domino or something for me to rig myself up in."

"No," she said petulantly, "we're late as it is." "The maid was threading its way down Broadway. About it were other taxis with other couples; there were couples on the tops of the buses; couples hustling on foot toward the theatres. Couples everywhere, and she was one of them. They, who meant to marry, only knew each other slightly—but, oh! thought Clover Elphinstone, how much more "slightly" they would come to know each other, once they were married! She thought she could manage so that she and this man scarcely ever spoke to each other at all on tete-a-tete. In the meantime the exasperating creature had made this taxi pass about fancy dress."

"Tiresome," she murmured. He apologized again, with irritating composure. "Afraid I couldn't even go as a politician, with my coat on turned inside out, either," said he. "The lining of my coat isn't quite all that could be wished. I've darned it too often, myself. We poor lachrymose, you know! Can you think of anything?" "No. Except—well, you'll have to wear my cloak as a domino. I see nothing else for it."

He took her hand and tucked it under the yellow wrap. "Now, do you mind if I suggest that you begin to look a little more engaged?" he looked at her.

Clover tilted her chin and met his light-blue eyes with a very cool glance. "I am looking at you."

"Not a very good effort," returned Harry Carmichael, looking down at her. "Smile."

"I am smiling," retorted Clover, and indeed at that moment her expression broke up, and in spite of herself, she laughed.

"Much better," he approved. "I am not going to do all the work, I warn you. Now, where are these girls—ah, there's one of them over there—the dance did end. The crowd eddied toward the sides of the room, and there came up against the odorway a boy in lounge-trousers and a slim figure in all black with shining horns above a pink-cherub face.

"What's that child's name?" demanded Carmichael quickly. "Sandal." "Right," then in a confident and carrying tone, "I say, Sandal!" The amazed flapper whisked about and stared at him. Major Carmichael? No, really, had he never called her by her Christian name before, but he had never addressed her at all.

"Come and hear the news," said he coolly. "Shall I tell her, Clover, or will you? We are to be cousins-in-law, Sandal, you know. Clover has so very kindly promised to marry me."

"To marry—to what? Clover?" came in a faint shriek. "Have you, Clover?" "Clover, enjoying deep, turned charm fall on. "Of course I have said, with great sweetness, "We're engaged."

## THE GUMPS—The Moth and the Flame



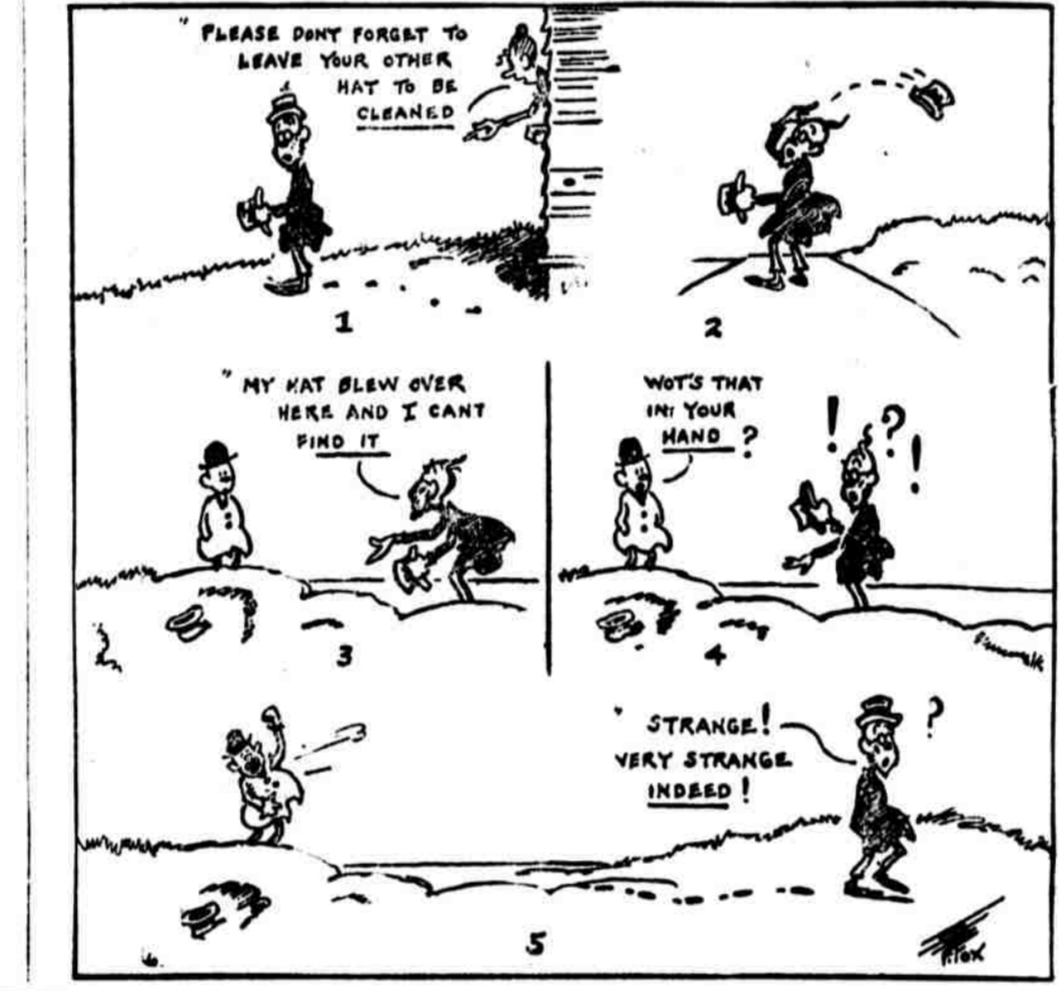
## SOMEBODY'S STENOG—She's Good at Riddles



## The Young Lady Across the Way



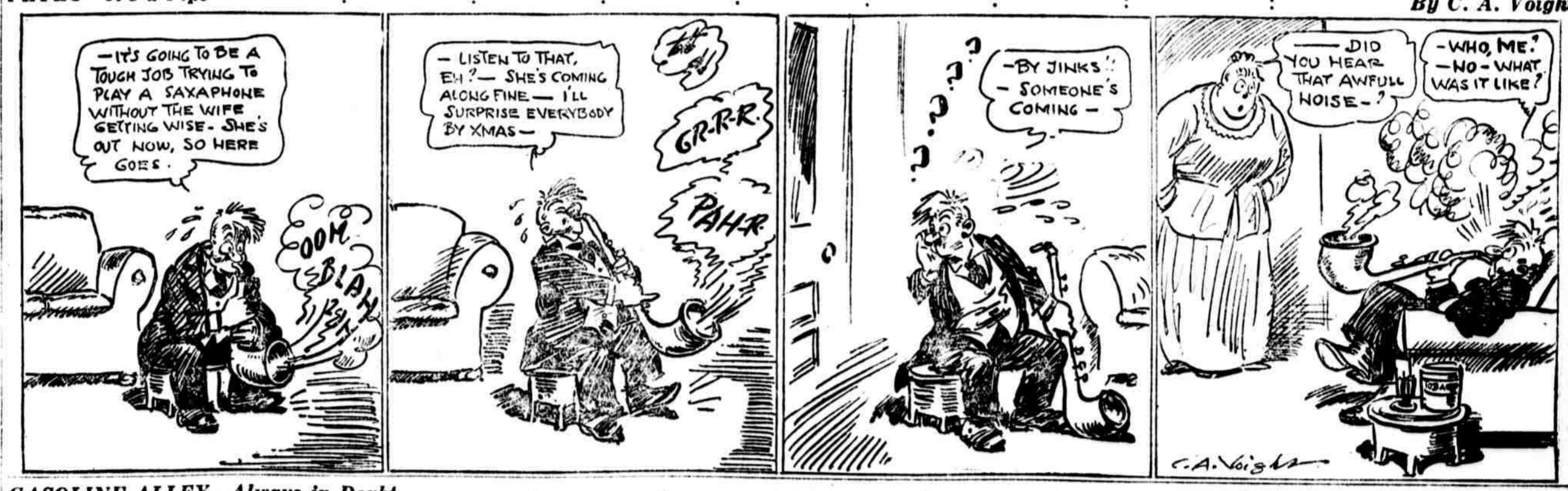
## THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR



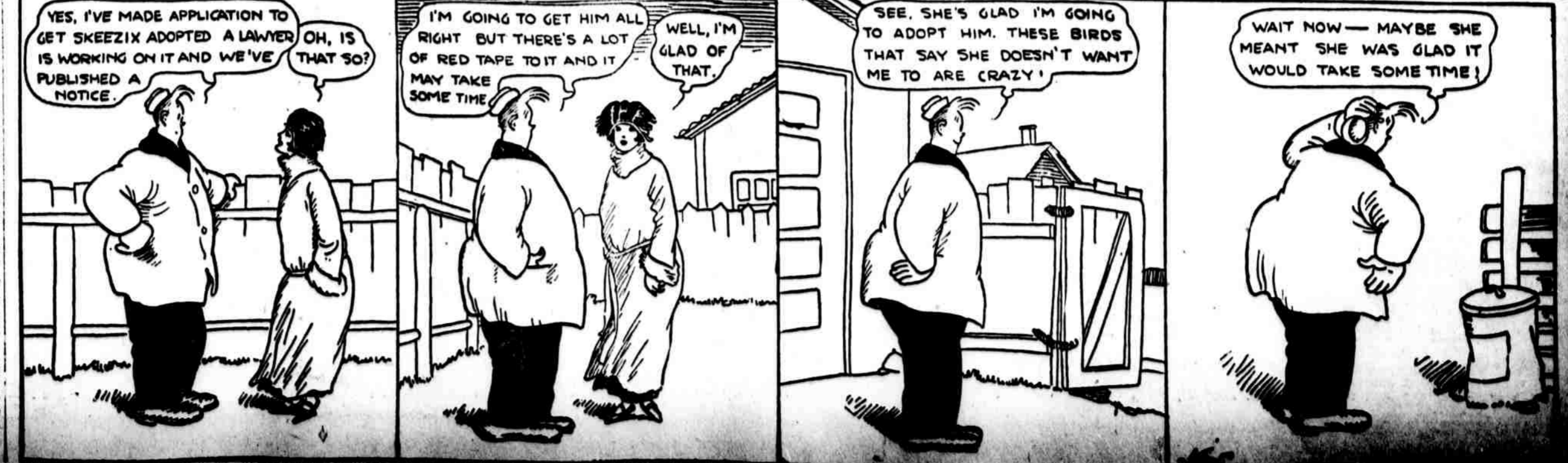
## SCHOOL DAYS



## PETEY—It's a Pipe



## GASOLINE ALLEY—Always in Doubt



Continued tomorrow