

The Subconscious Courtship

A modern woman's extraordinary scheme to keep suitors from interfering with her life is told in this fascinating novel

By BERTA RUCK

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

CLOVER ELPINSTONE, charming young widow, who has inherited a big business. Harried by relatives and friends who want to spend her money, she decides to marry a "husband for convenience" to fend off "the harpies."

LORD HARRY CARMICHAEL, World War veteran, man of personality, an engineer who has invented a new motor, to finance which he agrees to Clover's "strictly business" proposition.

ROSEMARY MEADOWS, Clover's cousin, a pretty girl of the period.

MRS. ELPINSTONE, aunt, who has befriended Clover in adversity and is cheered with factors.

SANDAL, younger daughter, a flapper.

HOLT, big, good-natured chap, happily in love with Rosemary.

CHAPTER V

The Married Bachelor

"WHAT?" asked Clover impersonally. "You going to do?"

"I'm afraid I shall have to go," said Carmichael in the voice of one at a tea party. Inwardly he told himself, "Oh it's short, cut it short. I can't stand much of this." He turned his face quickly toward the house.

"You mean you will leave Green street, go back to where you used to live?"

"I suppose so. I mean, I shall leave Green street, of course."

"And—what shall I—what ought I to do?"

"I don't know; I suppose you will do as you choose, won't you?" he said quickly, anxious to go, not to have to hear her voice any longer, not to see her face. "Stay here for a bit, perhaps, and then, of course, you have your people. Mrs. Meadows is always there. Your cousins. It will go back to what it was, as far as you're concerned except that of course you're married."

Clover's face as she looked at his worried profile was an entirely expressionless as are the faces of those who have too much to express. When human beings are caught in the grip of forces quite new to them, their usual means of conveying a sentiment, protest or appeal fail them like weapons which turn out to be of lath instead of steel.

Did Clover wish for this? Was it a weight off her mind that her show-husband had taken matters into his own hands and had cut the tangle? In a sense, yes. She was glad he had spoken out. But it was at the same moment that she realized something else. She did not want him to go. Quite unmistakably her wish was for him to stay—to say more—to say other things.

Even as she, all dazed, realized this, he spoke. He said, quickly and awkwardly: "You have done all and more than I asked you for. I—well, I wish I had not—brought you into all this."

She thought: "He puts it that, he troubles me in. That's rather wonderful of him, when it was all my idea."

He said, more harshly: "With regard to the money side of it, I'll write. What he meant to do was to send her back every penny of the sum that he owed to his bank, thanks to the large cheque paid in, in February last, by Elphinstone Brothers. That was quite clear to him; even in his agitation, rightly suppressed—and by what at all?"

He concluded: "Those lawyer-people will write anyhow."

"How hesitated? Must they?"

"I mean—well! Your not being here—must need not look like a separation? People know you are so busy. So?" Clover suggested with a touch of the childish simplicity which had already surprised him in a woman of her position. "I don't need to know about all this, really; need they?"

He gave a short, grim laugh. He glanced about and above them. Every side of that square was patterned with windows of surrounding houses. Behind each window Carmichael seemed to see eyes. Eyes of people who watched, who speculated, who saw, who guessed, who guessed, who knew.

"Probably you will be bound to know, presently, he assured her. "That can't be avoided, I am afraid. Of course, there need not be any unpleasantness. People will gradually tumble into it as they have been a mistake. Our getting married, I mean. Plenty of people have made that mistake."

"Not quite this kind of mistake," Clover replied, appointed, however, that is our business, not theirs."

"Yes." He could not suppress a movement of impatience. "Cut it short, but it's short, was the word which he said, but the voice within Clover cried, "Wait! Wait! Don't be in such a hurry. Must you let it come to this?"

Inner storm whirled then round and round. But the center of the cyclone was this deadly stillness. Only for one instant did it seem as though, through that stillness, something would break. Closer, with a little gesture more so familiar to him, but her hand to her face—and he was reminded of that other afternoon in Richmond Park. That was the looking. Here, at the end, she made that same pretty movement, and there drifted across to him that same scent—that well-known scent that was not so bitterly full of association—the fresh, alluring, persistent scent of sweetbrier under rain.

He was within one hair's-breadth of striking to her, both hands outstretched. She, on the tip of her tongue, had his name—"Harry." But he remained unmoved; he took a quick step not to her, but away from her.

"That's all, then. I don't trouble you."

"I shall pack now," said Harry Carmichael, "Good-by."

Yes. That was all. Without looking at her again he strode back into her house. He sought the thickly carpeted, charmingly appointed bedroom that had been his for a little more than a month. He rang for his bag and trunk; then swiftly began emptying wardrobes and drawers. He hadn't very much to take away, after all, he reflected, and nothing to leave.

Outside, by the fountain with its sculptured Love and the Fish, there but for the knot of sunshine-yellow among her furs. Perhaps it was the chill March breeze that made her shiver a little, but she would not go indoors.

She knew that he would not come down into the garden. She gave him half an hour in which to get away. But within twenty minutes he was into his taxi, and gone.

She thought: "Is it real? Has all

this actually happened? Will he never come back to this house?"

And that curious fair within her said, distinctly: "Never."

He never did come back to that house.

In nature's show-window of the London parks the lace-work of bare branches, with buds for knots in the lace, placed to the soft gauze scarves of April greys that, in turn, went out of season before the rioting rose-pink of London's May. But still there was no further meeting of the two who had parted on that afternoon of March.

The world—where they talk went on talking, nor did it forget the young Carmichaels. For instance—

Scene 1. Any London Club.

Any Club Man to Any Other Club Man: "I say, you know the great Cox, don't you? He's on to a sound line at last."

Ditto. Time he was; he's glittered plenty. What's the line?

Ditto. Not for ails. Telescopic, magnetic, the best idea yet.

Ditto. No?

Ditto. No; it's by a man called Carmichael, whom he's backing; the Turkish prison chap, very good fellow, too.

Ditto. Well, this club wants members. Why don't you put him up?

Ditto. Not your life? Not on Carmichael's life, rather. He's the most unobscure beggar yet; loathes clubs; can't get him inside one.

Ditto. That's funny; how did he get his name, plants, then?

Ditto. Oh, cherchez la femme. His wife happens to be Elphinstone Brothers, you know. The thing is to get the start, I suppose. She gave it to him.

Voice. Really? Somehow I fancied he was a bachelor; hung out in gloomy little dinghies in the Euston Road all alone and gave himself up entirely to improving his inventions. Must be some one else I was thinking about.

Voice. Is the mast going all right, though?

Voice. Rather. Look out for it—

Scene 2. Any Woman's Drawing Room

Between the Bridge Stairs

Green-top tables, jazz chintz, much useless litter in silver, porcelain and enamel. Atmosphere of scented clothes, face powder and cut flowers.

Feminine Voice. I thought you said Mrs. Carmichael was coming?

Ditto. No; busy. I told you, didn't I, that she was Elphinstone Brothers in public life.

Ditto. Elphinstone Brothers? We have always had shares, you know, but they say (deprecating head-shaking).

Ditto. I would rather stick to horses or bridge. Just as safe nowadays.

Ditto. Well, not industrial—

(A laugh. The lady who has just redoubled in legends is known to have come a cropper in industrial.)

Another Feminine Voice (in slight alarm). I say, you haven't heard anything about Elphinstones, have you?

Ditto. Oh, my dear, should I be likely to? It is only that everything is so shaky at present; most of us will be in the workhouse before we can say "Skilly." All I heard was—

Hostess (leaving resolutely in). Oh, come; is this a meeting of shareholders or a bridge four?

(Game resumed.)

(During the next interval.)

Feminine Voice. Bobbie Llewellyn the other day. With Mrs. Carmichael by the way.

Ditto—H'm.

Ditto—How suddenly the Carmichaels gave up that green street house? The people came back unexpectedly from abroad, or something. It all sounded rather curious. Where is Mrs. Carmichael now?

Ditto—Oh, rather amusing. She's gone back to that comic show of hers with the nut and the hundred cousins on Richmond Hill.

Ditto—H'm.

Ditto—How suddenly the Carmichaels gave up that green street house? The people came back unexpectedly from abroad, or something. It all sounded rather curious. Where is Mrs. Carmichael now?

Ditto—Oh, rather amusing. She's gone back to that comic show of hers with the nut and the hundred cousins on Richmond Hill.

Chorus of Several Voices—What?

Voice (impressively). Yes, Franciscan busy time at the office is the excuse given. It seemed early days for rifts in lutes, to me.

Voice (eagerly)—Do you mean to say he isn't there, too?

Ditto—He, my dear, has gone back to living in a wine cellar or something in the Euston road. Perfecting some sort of new wing for airplanes, or something like the excuse given out there. And he never goes near her.

Ditto—What? But they give a big theatre party or something to the Algonquin Cozes?

(A shrug.)

Voice (incredulously)—But she's so lovely. Never goes near her? They're never together?

Voice of the lady with the information—If they are, my dear, when? Nobody knows! So it's safe to say they aren't!

That is what the world said. And as regards the main fact, the world was perfectly right.

Clover had returned to that house, but it was not on Richmond Hill. One more she slept in the bedroom that was like the inside of a yellow tulip. Once more she was supposed to own that super-luxury with the Etruscan which she had never had to herself; for once more when she tried the door she frequently found it locked and heard the low growl of "Oh, Clover, pet, you don't mind little Sandal sitting in here for a while?" Once more her embroidery frame and her Times ("Club now were to be found among the other girlish litter in that drawing room crowded with furniture of every reign from that of Queen Anne to that of Heil & Son. Once more she took up the old life; once more there was Toddy to be coached in table manners, Laverder, Rosemary and Sandal to be seen through as regarded frocks, amusements and pocket money; once more she went from Richmond to the city that nowadays with a more anxious face; once more there were tramps through Ham Gate into Richmond Park.

(Bronze green now glowed the fresh foliage of the oak that had been blackly leafless on the afternoon that Carmichael had proposed to her. No, no, it was she, of course, who proposed to him that January Sunday afternoon. Often she thought of it. Then, quite often, she made herself forget.)

Once more now there were those little Sunday afternoons filling the house with flappers and growing lads, and bringing again to Clover quite often the "usual four" of her old-time admirers: Mr. Fontaine, Mr. Onks, Captain Clyde and Bobbie Llewellyn.

And Carmichael? What of his life? As it was in the beginning, so it was now resumed, and so, with certain differences, it continued. He rose at 7 from his little green Wiltsden camp couch; was shaved by 7:20. He bathed in the india-rubber bath from Moss Brothers. He dressed in his pre-war tweeds; he frowned a little over his sudden breakfast tippor. Mrs. Bates, with all her points, was no cook.) He went to his office.

SOMEbody'S STENOG—Leaving the Boy Out of the Conversation

LOOK AT THAT! A LETTER COMPLAININ' THAT WE SHIPPED TWO THOUSAND BRASS NUTS IN THE SAME BOX WITH A HUNDRED GLASS PICKLE DISHES! ANOTHER PROOF MY BOY WORKS HERE! I TOLD HER TO SEND THOSE INSTRUCTIONS ON THIS JOB TO THE SHIPPING DEPT. HERSELF! SHE'S RESPONSIBLE! I AM GOIN' TO HAVE A SILLY GIRL'S LOVE SPISMS MAKE MY LIFE A MUX! MISS O'FLAGE, COME IN HERE!

MISTER SMITHERS YOUR SON -

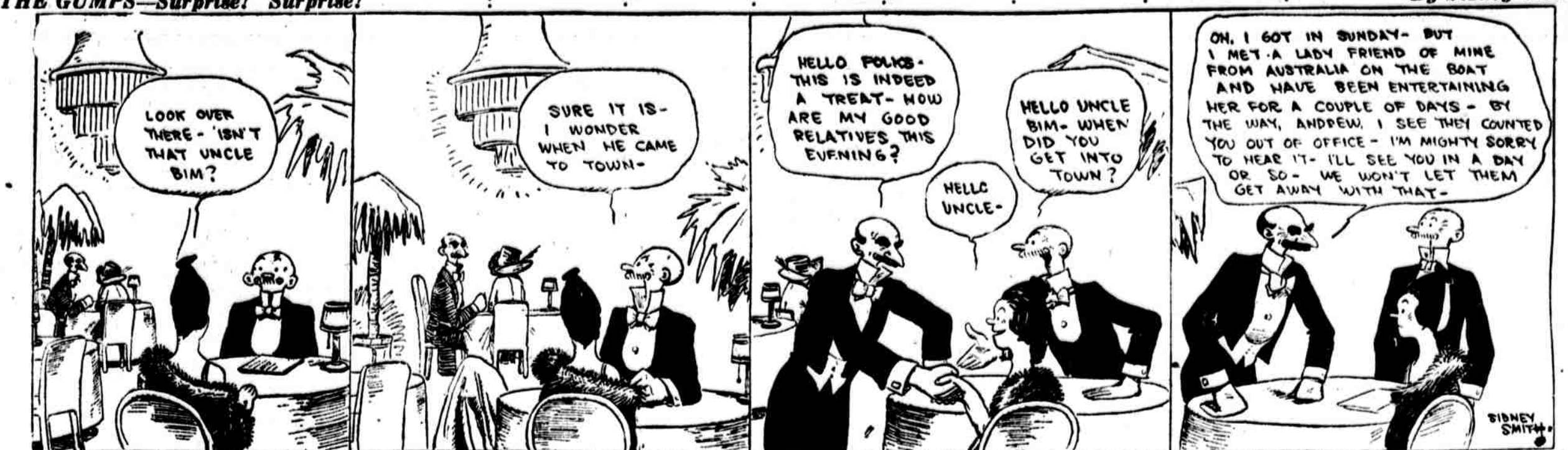
YOUNG LADY WE'LL LEAVE MY SON OUT OF THIS CONVERSATION! I GAVE MY SON A POSITION OF AUTHORITY HERE IT'S NOT FITTING THAT A WORKING GIRL SHOULD SPEAK OF HIM WITH FAM-FAMILIAR-RRIT-Y! (AHEH.)

I ONLY WANTED TO EXPLAIN THAT YOUR SON -

I SAID I DON'T WANT YOU TO TALK ABOUT MY SON! ALL I WANT TO KNOW IS WHAT CALF-BRAINED, PIA-HEADED 22 CALIBRE PEANUT INSTRUCTED AN ORDER TO BE SENT OUT THAT WAY!

YOUR SON

Copyright, 1922, by Public Ledger Co.



By Hayward



Copyright, 1922, by Public Ledger Co.

The Young Lady Across the Way

Green-top tables, jazz chintz, much useless litter in silver, porcelain and enamel. Atmosphere of scented clothes, face powder and cut flowers.

Feminine Voice. I thought you said Mrs. Carmichael was coming?

Ditto. No; busy. I told you, didn't I, that she was Elphinstone Brothers in public life.

Ditto. Elphinstone Brothers? We have always had shares, you know, but they say (deprecating head-shaking).

Ditto. I would rather stick to horses or bridge. Just as safe nowadays.

Ditto. Well, not industrial—

(A laugh. The lady who has just redoubled in legends is known to have come a cropper in industrial.)

Another Feminine Voice (in slight alarm). I say, you haven't heard anything about Elphinstones, have you?

Ditto. Oh, my dear, should I be likely to? It is only that everything is so shaky at present; most of us will be in the workhouse before we can say "Skilly." All I heard was—

Hostess (leaving resolutely in). Oh, come; is this a meeting of shareholders or a bridge four?

(Game resumed.)

(During the next interval.)

Feminine Voice. Bobbie Llewellyn the other day. With Mrs. Carmichael by the way.

Ditto—H'm.

Ditto—How suddenly the Carmichaels gave up that green street house? The people came back unexpectedly from abroad, or something. It all sounded rather curious. Where is Mrs. Carmichael now?

Ditto—Oh, rather amusing. She's gone back to that comic show of hers with the nut and the hundred cousins on Richmond Hill.

Ditto—H'm.

Ditto—How suddenly the Carmichaels gave up that green street house? The people came back unexpectedly from abroad, or something. It all sounded rather curious. Where is Mrs. Carmichael now?

Ditto—Oh, rather amusing. She's gone back to that comic show of hers with the nut and the hundred cousins on Richmond Hill.

Chorus of Several Voices—What?

Voice (impressively). Yes, Franciscan busy time at the office is the excuse given. It seemed early days for rifts in lutes, to me.

Voice (eagerly)—Do you mean to say he isn't there, too?

Ditto—He, my dear, has gone back to living in a wine cellar or something in the Euston road. Perfecting some sort of new wing for airplanes, or something like the excuse given out there. And he never goes near her.

Ditto—What? But they give a big theatre party or something to the Algonquin Cozes?

(A shrug.)

Voice (incredulously)—But she's so lovely. Never goes near her? They're never together?

Voice of the lady with the information—If they are, my dear, when? Nobody knows! So it's safe to say they aren't!

That is what the world said. And as regards the main fact, the world was perfectly right.

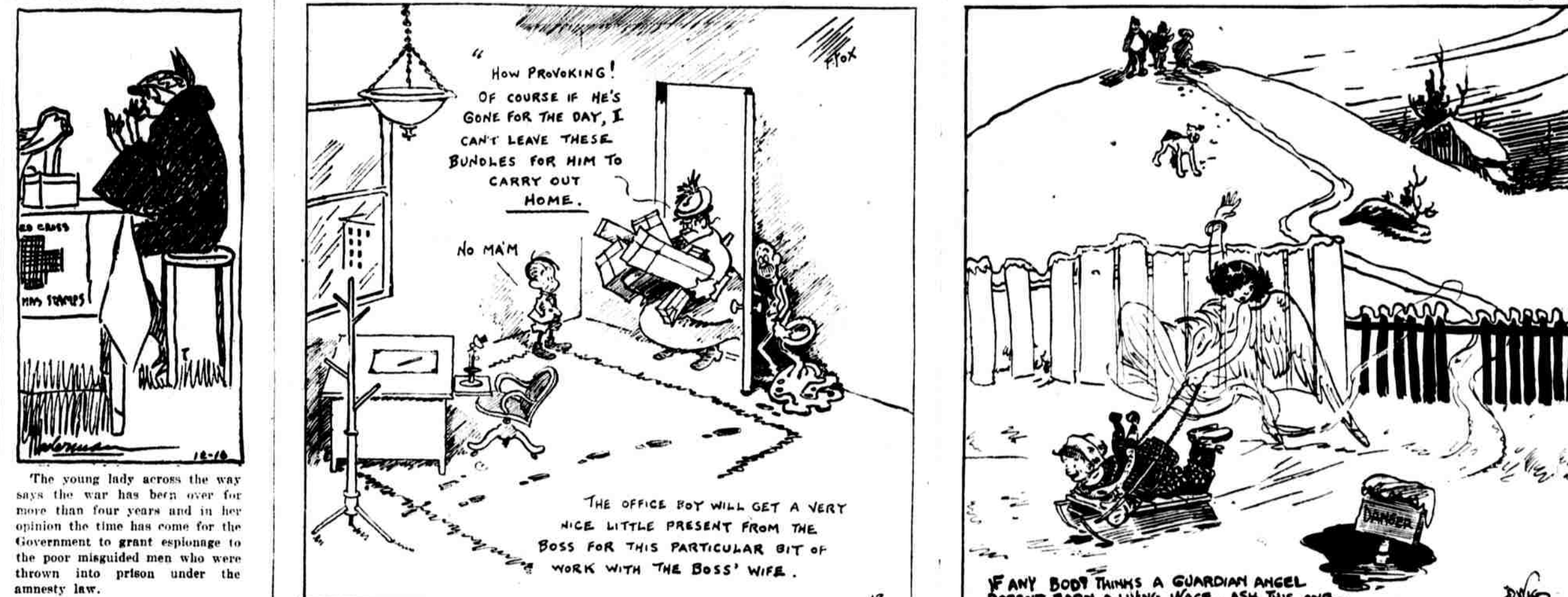
Clover had returned to that house, but it was not on Richmond Hill. One more she slept in the bedroom that was like the inside of a yellow tulip. Once more she was supposed to own that super-luxury with the Etruscan which she had never had to herself; for once more when she tried the door she frequently found it locked and heard the low growl of "Oh, Clover, pet, you don't mind little Sandal sitting in here for a while?" Once more her embroidery frame and her Times ("Club now were to be found among the other girlish litter in that drawing room crowded with furniture of every reign from that of Queen Anne to that of Heil & Son. Once more she took up the old life; once more there was Toddy to be coached in table manners, Laverder, Rosemary and Sandal to be seen through as regarded frocks, amusements and pocket money; once more she went from Richmond to the city that nowadays with a more anxious face; once more there were tramps through Ham Gate into Richmond Park.

(Bronze green now glowed the fresh foliage of the oak that had been blackly leafless on the afternoon that Carmichael had proposed to her. No, no, it was she, of course, who proposed to him that January Sunday afternoon. Often she thought of it. Then, quite often, she made herself forget.)

Once more now there were those little Sunday afternoons filling the house with flappers and growing lads, and bringing again to Clover quite often the "usual four" of her old-time admirers: Mr. Fontaine, Mr. Onks, Captain Clyde and Bobbie Llewellyn.

And Carmichael? What of his life? As it was in the beginning, so it was now resumed, and so, with certain differences, it continued. He rose at 7 from his little green Wiltsden camp couch; was shaved by 7:20. He bathed in the india-rubber bath from Moss Brothers. He dressed in his pre-war tweeds; he frowned a little over his sudden breakfast tippor. Mrs. Bates, with all her points, was no cook.) He went to his office.

THE BOSS TOOK AN AWFUL, AWFUL CHANCE



By DWIG

PETEY—An Experience Miles From Palm Beach

—WELL, WE GOTTA EXPECT THIS COLD SNAP—HAD IT PRETTY SOFT SO FAR THIS WINTER.

—PITY THE POOR PEOPLE WHO KINDER NASTY, NO COAL OR ANYTHING—

—YES, THEY'RE THE ONES WHO SUFFER—PRETTY BAD NIGHT FOR 'EM—GUESS WE'RE LUCKY—Y'LL KNUCK WOOD.

—YES, INDEED—FRIGHTFULLY ROTTEN FOR THE POOR DEVILS WE OUGHTA BE THANKFULL.

—BUNDLE UP IT'S GETTING COLD OUT.

—COME PETEY, GET THE CAR STARTED.

—CAR—ER—ER—OH, YES, THE CAR—

—WHAT WERE YOU MEN TALKING ABOUT THAT KEW YOU SO LONG—?

—IT—MUST—BE—FROZEN—UP—

By C. A. Voight



GASOLINE ALLEY—Assembling the Necessities

IT WILL MAKE MOTHER HAPPY IF WE JUST PACK UP AND GO AND SURPRISE HER - NOT LET HER KNOW WE'RE COMING.

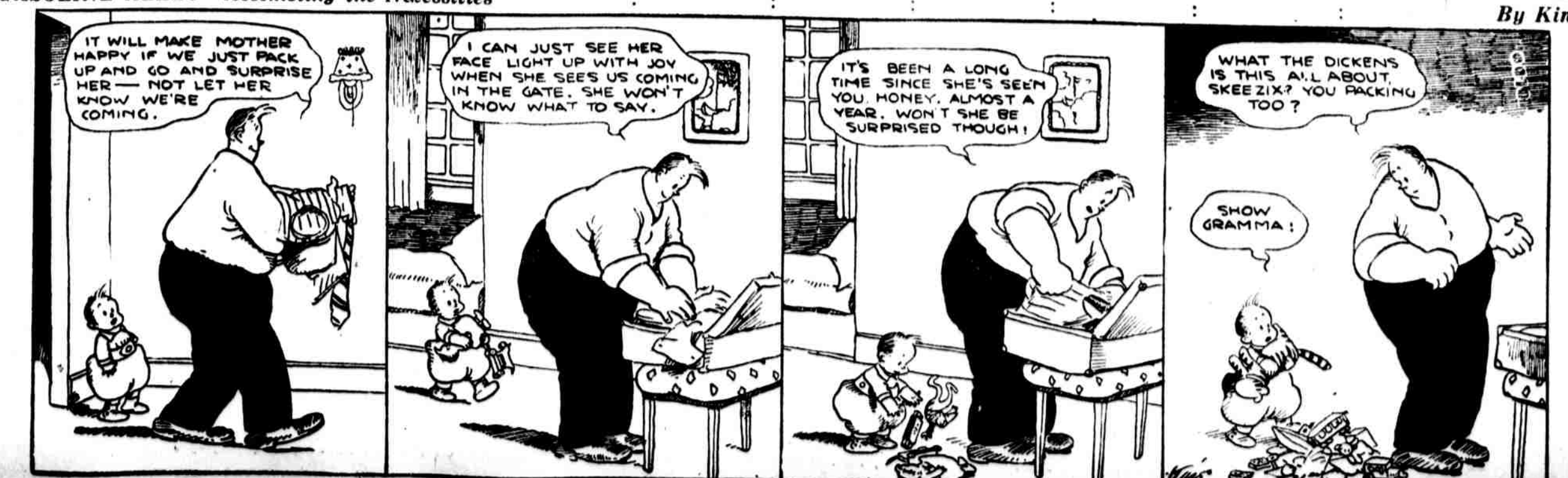
I CAN JUST SEE HER FACE LIGHT UP WITH JOY WHEN SHE SEES US COMING IN THE GATE. SHE WON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY.

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE SHE'S SEEN YOU MONEY. ALMOST A YEAR, WON'T SHE BE SURPRISED THOUGH!

WHAT THE DICKENS IS THIS ALL ABOUT, SKEEZIX? YOU PACKING TOO?

SHOW GRAMMA!

By King



CONTINUED TOMORROW