

Reading for Women and all the Family



Bringing Up Father

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By McManus

BIG TIMBER

By BERTRAND W. SINCLAIR

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Continued

Katy John and her people came back from the salmon fishing. Then Charlie wheeled Stella into taking up the cookhouse burden again. Stella consented. In truth she could do nothing else. Charlie spent a little of his contract profits in piping water to the kitchen and a few things to brighten up and make more comfortable their own quarters.

"Just as soon as I can put another boom over the rapids, Stell," he promised, "I'll put a cook on the job. I've got to sail a little closer for awhile. With this crew I ought to put a million feet in the water in six weeks. Then I'll be over the hump, and you can take it easy. But till then—"

"Till then I may as well make myself useful," Stella interrupted caustically.

"Well, why not?" Benton demanded impatiently. "Nobody around here works any harder than I do."

And there the matter rested.

CHAPTER VI One Way Out

That was a winter of big snow. November opened with rain. Day after day the sun hid his face behind massed, spitting clouds. Morning, noon and night the eaves of the shacks dripped steadily, the gaunt limbs of hardwoods were a line of coursing drops, and through all the vast reaches of fir and cedar the patter of rain kept up a dreary monotone. Whenever the mist that blew like rolling smoke along the mountains lifted for a brief hour there, creeping steadily downward, lay the banked white.

Before the snow put a stop to toasting, Jack Fyfe dropped in once a week or so. When work shut down he came oftener, but he never singled Stella out for any particular attention. Once he surprised her sitting with her face buried in her palms. She looked up at his quiet entrance, and her face must have given him his cue. He leaned a little toward her.

"How long do you think you can stand it?" he asked gently.

"God knows," she answered, surprised into speaking the thought that lay uppermost in her mind, sur-



prised beyond measure that he should read that thought.

He stood looking down at her for a second or two. His lips parted, but he closed them again over what-over rose to his tongue and passed silently through the dining room and into the bunkhouse, where Benton had preceded him a matter of ten minutes.

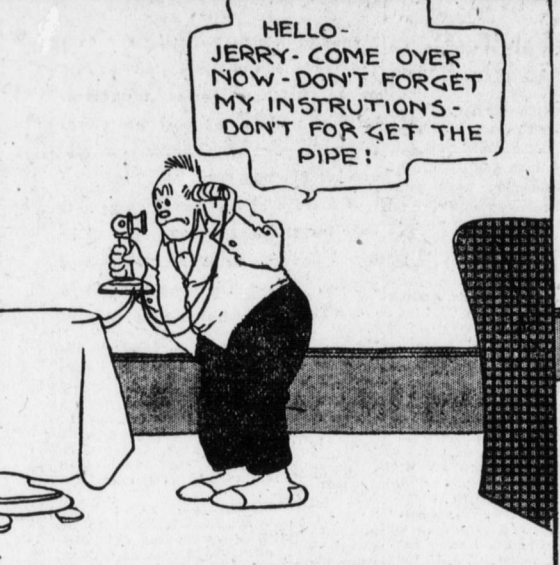
It lacked a week of Christmas. That day three of Benton's men had gone in the Chickamin to Roaring Springs for supplies. They had returned in midafternoon, and Stella guessed by the new note of hilarity in the bunkhouse that part of the supplies had been liquid. This had happened more than once since the big snow closed in. She remembered Charlie's fury at the logger who started Matt the cook on his spree, and she wondered at this relaxation, but it was not in her province, and she made no comment.

Jack Fyfe stayed to supper that evening. Neither he nor Charlie came back to Benton's quarters when the meal was finished. While she stacked up the dishes Katy John observed:

"Goodness sakes, Miss Benton, them fellers was fresh at supper. They was half drunk, some of them. I bet they'll be a dozen fights before mornin'."

In the dead silence that followed she heard a thud and the clinking smash of breaking glass, a panted oath, sounds of struggle.

Stella slipped on a pair of her brother's gum boots and an overcoat and ran out on the path beaten from their cabin to the shore. It lay past the bunkhouse, and on that



side opened two uncurtained windows, yellow squares that struck gleaming on the snow. The panes of one were broken now, sharp fragments standing like saw teeth in the wooden sash.

She stole warily near and looked in. Two men were being held apart, one by three of his fellows, the other by Jack Fyfe alone. Fyfe grinned mildly, talking to the men in a quiet, pacific tone.

"Now you know that was nothing to scrap about," she heard him say. "You're both full of fighting whisky, but a bunkhouse isn't any place to fight. Wait till morning. If you've still got it in your systems go outside and have it out. But you shouldn't disturb our game and break up the furniture. Be gentlemen, drunk or sober. Better shake hands and call it square."

"Aw, let 'em go to it, if they want to."

Charlie's voice, drink thickened, harsh, came from a corner of the room into which she could not see until she moved nearer. By the time she was within hearing distance his seat at the table where three others and Benton waited with cards in their hands, red and white chips and money stacked before them.

She knew enough of cards to realize that a stiff poker game was on the board when she had watched one hand dealt and played. It was a bluff, but because of her brother's part in it. He had no funds to pay a cook's wages, yet he could afford to lose on one hand as much as he credited her with for a month's work. She could slave at the kitchen job day in and day out to save him \$45 a month. He could lose that

without the flicker of an eyelash, but he couldn't pay her wages on demand. Also she saw that he had imbibed too freely, if the redness of his face and the glassy fixedness of his eyes could be read aright.

"Fig!" she muttered. "If that's his idea of pleasure. Oh, well, why should I care? I don't, so far as he's concerned, if he could just get away from this beast of a place myself."

Abreast of her a logger came to the broken window with a sack to bar out the frosty air. And Stella, realizing suddenly that she was shivering with the cold, ran back to the cabin and got into her bed.

But she did not sleep, save in un-peaceful mood of dozing, until midnight was long past. Then Fyfe and her brother, came in, and by the sounds she gathered that Fyfe was putting Charlie to bed. She heard his deep, drawing voice urging the unwisdom of sleeping with calked boots on and Benton's hiccupy response. The rest of the night she slept fitfully, morbidly imagining terrible things. She was afraid, that was the sum and substance of it. Over in the bunkhouse, the carousal was still at its height. She could not rid herself of the sight of those two men struggling to be at each other like wild beasts, the bloody face of the one who had been struck, the coarse animalism of the whole whisky saturated gang. It repelled and disgusted and frightened her.

To be Continued

At last deciding that it would be better to ring and discover whether she was wanted, Helen pressed the button. There was a sudden cessation of the weeping, and the stir of someone moving on the other side of the door. Helen knew by the sound that whoever was crying was in the big studio, for the outer door opened directly into it.

After waiting another minute or two the door was swung open, not by the woman, but by Viva Nesbitt, her unusually sleek little head strangely tumbled and her great dark eyes heavy with tears.

"My dear child," Helen began, hardly knowing what to say.

"Oh, it's you, Mrs. Curtis," Viva said abruptly; "did you want to see Frances? She's not in this morning."

Viva's remark was plainly discourteous and Helen felt that the girl did not want to be bothered, but with her really character that had come with the past few months, and the actual friendship that Helen had hoped had sprung up between them, she could not bear to let Viva suffer all alone.

"Viva, dear," Helen said timidly, afraid of being repulsed, "please let me help you."

There was a moment's silence as Viva's eyes met Helen's uncompromisingly, and then, almost as if without the flicker of an eyelash, she turned away, and Helen came in and closed the door.

She did not press the girl, but finally, when Viva made no effort to slip her arm around the girl's shoulders. Instantly there was a long-drawn sigh and the girl drew away.

"Please don't," she said, in muffled tones, "there's nothing at all you can do."

"Is it about Mr. Leonard?" Helen whispered, before Viva could freeze her out entirely.

As though the mention of the name had recalled everything to her, Viva wheeled suddenly.

"Yes, they've taken him," she stormed passionately; "of course you can't know what that means to me, but he's all I have, all I have in this world to care for."

Again came those long, racking sobs that shook the girl all over and made Helen wonder how so frail a body could sustain such wild grief.

"You'd better go, Mrs. Curtis, before I say something I shall be sorry for. I don't want anyone to tell me to bear up and be proud of him and all the time-worn sentiments that people advance who don't know what they're talking about. Other girls have happy homes, people to love them, everything in the world to make them happy. I have just him. He's the first person I have ever loved like this. I need him more than his country needs him."

Helen was sorer for Viva than she had even been for anyone in her life. What the girl said was true in a way, and Helen leaned weight in an influence over Viva's wild, impassioned nature that had certainly re-

"THEIR MARRIED LIFE"

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Helen heard sounds of weeping on the other side of the door that led into the Atwood apartment. She stopped and considered gravely.

"Ought he to go in? Was Frances in any deep trouble, and if so, wasn't it possible that she might not want to be disturbed? Then on the other hand was the fact that if Frances and Carp, and yet what could there be in Frances' happy life to make her sob so terribly?"

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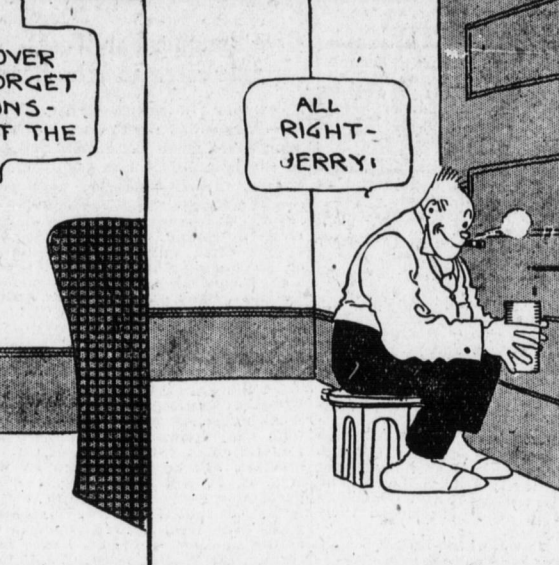
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and she held out her hands impulsively.

There was a tense moment and then the fierce light in Viva's eyes died out. She wavered a moment and then slipped across into Helen's comforting arms. Helen let her sob quietly, for she knew that after the first shock was over Viva's new powers of self-control would assert themselves and she would meet the situation bravely and well.

(Watch for the next instalment of this always interesting series.)

BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

Chronicles of Pennsylvania, from the English Revolution to the Peace of Ayl-la-Chapelle, 1688-1748, by Charles P. Kelch. For sale by the author, 308 Walnut street, Philadelphia, at \$5 (covering both volumes and postage.)

This work deals with a neglected and misunderstood portion of Pennsylvania history, the sixty years when the settlement of British Quakers in Philadelphia and adjacent counties had already been accomplished, and the French and Indian wars had not been begun. Penn's later life, the pacifist stand of the Legislature, the German and Scotch-Irish immigrations, and the inauguration of paper money based upon farmers' loans, were the great features, while having the most last-



ing results were the establishment of the great religious denominations, not only the Society of Friends, but also the Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Mennonites, Moravians, Presbyterians, Schwenkfelders and Reformed. As to all these impartially much information, sometimes many details, with biographical sketches of Whitefield and Zinzendorf, are given in this work, which also discusses some matters like Penn's treaty, the land system, the laundry dispute with Maryland, etc., sometimes overrunning the period. The author is not a Quaker, not violently anti-Quaker, but is fairly critical and yet charitable; the undertaking is no eulogium upon William Penn, whose faults and mistakes are shown up, and he is likened to a Stuart king, while such allowance is made for his abilities and his difficulties that he is called "more of a statesman than a saint, a better preacher than a business man, a rather weak ruler, but, considering the people he had to deal with, including kings, Quakers and Indians, and his general success, we ought finally to say the greatest of the long line of Pennsylvania politicians."

Some things about him will astonish most readers; for instance, a bishop of the Church of England suggested the policy of buying the Indians' land. Penn's urging of a Parliament or Peace Tribunal of Europe has lately received attention. The author takes the Maryland side in the

boundary contention. Much of the two volumes forming the book is taken up with the Indians as tribes, nations, or political bodies having constant affairs with the province.

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