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'A WIFE'S STORY'

By JANE PHELPS

CHAPTER LIV

It was 12 o'clock when Joan came in. I had no idea it was so late, and started to reprimand her, but the sight of her glowing face, her intent eyes fixed upon me halted the words on my lips.

"Oh Mother! I'm so glad you're up. I want to talk to you," she said in an eager voice as she took off her hat. "May I ask some of the boys and girls down for a week end? Dad won't be home, and if Laura and I sleep in your room we'll have places for them all."

"I think we might arrange it. How many do you want to ask?" I replied, making mental note of our accommodations.

"Only three boys and two girls. That will make six of us. The girls can have our room, the boys in the guest room. We can go out in the bon, play tennis, and have a really nice time. And I'm in debt to them all."

"We can manage that number very nicely," I returned. "It would be a relief to have the house full of young folks, keep me from thinking of Logan, what he had said and—done. Then, too, I was glad to give Joan pleasure, innocent pleasure. I was very anxious over her. She was so variable, full of life at times, then down in the depths. This moodiness had been very apparent of late and her spells of depression lasted longer. So, late as it was, I discussed what we would do to entertain her young guests, even the food we would give them. Joan was all animation, and when we finally parted she threw her arms around my neck and said—

"No had girl ever had such a good mother."

Her unwonted caress brought the tears to my eyes. Like her father, Joan was chary about showing affection. And I lay long awake planning how I could make her week end party a real success.

Saturday morning brought her five guests, Clem Sanders one of them. I had met the others, all but one of the girls, a delicate, aristocratic looking girl, Madge Dearing, who seemed to want to keep Clem waiting upon her.

The day passed off delightfully. They played tennis in the morning, went in swimming before luncheon, and in the afternoon went on the

water; after a late dinner they danced. I had invited some young friends of Laura's in so that she might not be wholly left out. I was so busy that, save for a passing moment, all Dave Logan had said or implied was forced from my mind. I had determined Joan's party should be a success if I could make it so.

Sunday morning dawned bright and beautiful. The young people arose late, and after breakfast wandered about either stately or in groups until time to take their swim. A light luncheon, then they again went out for a row, while Laura and I, assisted by my maid, prepared the dinner, and tidied up the house.

I had noted with disquietude that Joan seemed quiet, that her gaiety of the day previous had left her. But I was so busy I had no time to look for the cause. After they came in from their row on the water they dawdled about, playing all the new records, and chatting together until dinner time. It was a warm night, and after dinner they went out into the yard. I wanted to speak to Joan and, after a bit, went in search of her. I saw her disappear behind the summer house, where someone was sitting, and followed. As I passed the little vine covered summer house I heard Joan's name spoken, and recognized the voice as Madge Dearing's.

"I don't believe you Clem. I think you are in love with her," she said. "I know she is with you. She was as glum as an oyster because you talked to me in the boat."

"Don't be a goose, Madge. You know well enough I'm not serious with Joan. No fellow could be."

I was about to move away but Clem's last words halted me. I desisted a listener, but felt that I had the right to know what was said of Joan.

"Everyone thinks you are going to marry her," Madge said in a petulant tone.

"Marry a girl who drinks, and whose father is a common bootlegger? I guess not!"

I wanted to cry out, to force the boy to retract the words he had uttered, but was unable to move or speak. After a moment I saw Joan again. She was walking away from the summer house. Had she too heard?

To be continued

YEAR'S BEST FIGHT WAS JACK DEMPSEY'S KNOCKOUT OF FIRPO

NEW YORK, Dec. 31.—(A. P.)—Establishing a record for championship activity, the pugilistic season of 1923 has taken rank as the most spectacular, if not the greatest ever witnessed.

Nine battles with world's championships at stake, in five of which titles changed hands, were fought during the year, the climax coming sensationally when Jack Dempsey successfully defended his heavyweight crown by knocking out Luis Angel Firpo, Argentine challenger, in the second round at the Polo Grounds.

That savage, furious struggle between the American "Tigerman" and the "Wild Bull of the Pampas" lasted less than four minutes but, in the most remarkable battle of all time, an epic that has no parallel in ring history. Knocked down even times in the first round, Firpo came back with a battering rush that drove Dempsey through the ropes and all but toppled the American from his throne but the champion crushed his opponent in the second round, the final count coming on the South American's ninth knock-down.

With the exception of Joe Lynch, bantamweight king, and Mickey Walker, welterweight titleholder, all of the world's champions risked their titles in important matches and the end of the season found four new flat-toppers at the top. They are Pancho Villa, Filipino whittler, who knocked Jimmy Wilde, little Britisher, from the flyweight throne; Johnny Dundee, New York Italian, who battered Eugene Criqui, French war veteran, into defeat two months after the latter had knocked out Johnny Kilbane for the featherweight scepter; Harry Greb, Pittsburg "windmill," who de-

prived Johnny Wilson, of Boston, of middleweight laurels; and Mike McTigue, Irish-American who won the light heavyweight crown by outpointing Batting Siki, the singular Senegalese, on St. Patrick's day in Dublin. McTigue narrowly saved his title by getting a draw in a riotous match with Young Stribling, Georgia schoolboy in October.

Dempsey and Benny Leonard, lightweight king, remained masters of their classes. Besides battling Firpo, the heavyweight titleholder defended his crown against Tommy Gibbons, of St. Paul, in the little Montana boom town of Shelby, on the Fourth of July falling to score a knock-out but winning decisively on points in 15 rounds. Leonard met his foremost rival, Lew Tendler, once more and scored a decisive victory in a 15-round match at the Yankee stadium.

Two American ring titles also changed hands but in both cases the losers acquired other laurels before the season closed. Villa lost the American flyweight title to Frankie Genaro, of New York, before conquering Wilde, and Greb was shorn of his American light heavyweight title by Gus Tunney, former soldier boxer and Greenwich Village idol, before defeating Wilson. Tunney whipped Greb in defense of his 175-pound honors recently at Madison Square Garden, and apparently settled their rivalry of two years' standing.

Though dwarfed by comparison with the Dempsey-Firpo battle, many other colorful ring spectacles held the limelight in a season that witnessed the passing of several notable figures from the ring and the ascendancy of new pugilistic stars.

Kilbane, ruler of the featherweight realm for more than ten years, and Wilde, long king of the flyweights, were two veterans who passed into the discard. Jess Willard, Kansas man mountain, startled fans with a comeback that seemed promising when he knocked out Floyd Johnson, young lowan, but faded into oblivion under the crushing right of Firpo in a July battle at Boyle's Thirty Acres. It was Willard's first ring campaign since losing the heavyweight title to Dempsey at Toledo in 1919, and his result effectually erased his long-cher-

ished hope of a return match with the Manassa Mauler.

The meteoric swath cut by Firpo through heavyweight ranks was the high spot of the season in many ways. The giant Argentine, returning to the United States early in the year, launched a campaign that carried him from practical obscurity to a championship match in six months, a feat unparalleled in ring annals. Firpo knocked out Bill Brennan, Jack McAuliffe and Willard, besides engaging in a series of lesser bouts, and although beaten by Dempsey, remained a dangerous challenger. A return match with the champion already is assured the South American, and promises to feature the 1924 program.

Harry Wills, New Orleans contender for Dempsey's title for nearly two years, failed once more in efforts to obtain a championship match. Inactive most of the year, Wills began a campaign early in the winter to establish his title contention. Another promising contender emerged in Jack Renault, hard-hitting Canadian, while Gibbons is seeking a return fight with Dempsey.

Criqui, Witte, and Firpo gave a decided international turn to the year's program. Battling Siki, picturesque conquerer of Georges Carpentier, invaded America toward the close of the year but met defeat in his first fight, a 15-round match with Kid Norfolk.

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I DIDN—I THOUGHT IT WAS YOUR NATURAL FACE

WATCH FOR "TUBBY" AND HIS DOIN'S IN THE DAILY NEWS-REVIEW