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Wife (returned home from visit on the morning after a burglary had taken place): "And I suppose you slept through it all?"
Meek Little Husband: "I—er—yes, I did."—Punch.

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Daughters of Midas

by Anne Austin

THIS HAS HAPPENED

T. Q. Curtis, millionaire department store owner, takes three girls from his establishment into his home as his wards for one year because he wants to help them further ambitions such as expressed. Billy Wells, anxious to be a concert violinist, is the only one that is sincere. Nyda Lomas and Winnie Shelton lie to enjoy T. Q.'s generosity.

Billy becomes infatuated with Dai Romaine, nephew of Mrs. Meadows, the hostess. Dai is also "playing" Winnie, who is in love with him.

Billy loses interest in her violin. Old T. Q. observes this and also that Nyda, who says she wants to be a kindergarten teacher, is not interested in her work. Winnie tries to win her way into T. Q.'s affections by offering to do his letters for him in the evenings.

T. Q. discovers his safe is robbed by someone on the "inside." Suspicion points to Billy and she calls on Clay Curtis, son of her benefactor, to help her. Clay has disinherited himself and is living with the Wells family in a poor part of town, working in a factory by day and writing music at night. Clay forces a confession of the robbery from Nyda and Eddie Banning, her former sweetheart. They also admit having been married the entire year. Winnie Shelton finds a legal paper in T. Q.'s desk showing that Billy is to be adopted by him and in order not to be defeated, Winnie calls T. Q. to her room and there tricks him into a proposal of marriage. Viola, the maid, whom Winnie has bribed to witness the situation, gives the ring away. T. Q. is stunned and calls Billy and Mrs. Meadows to the library and tells them what has happened. When Billy is left alone with him, she confesses that the three girls knew all along he intended to adopt one of them and she tells him they have not played fairly with him.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER I VI
"Maybe I didn't scheme and try to hurt Nyda's and Winnie's chances," Billy told T. Q. Curtis, "but for months I have hoped that I would win."

"Why, Billy? Why did you change your mind? You told Clay, you say, that you wanted only the year—the year in which to study the violin and prepare yourself for a career. Can you have a little more patience with an old man, my dear, and try to explain?"

"I'll try," she said humbly. "It all began when Navratil told me it would take years and years for me to become a great violinist. I saw then that a year would not do, and I wanted more. Then luxury began to soften me, break down my sturdy independence, as Clay used to call it. I couldn't bear the thought of giving up my lovely room and delicate food—and dancing and popularity with the kind of people I had always admired and wanted to be friends with. I became extravagant, bought clothes I couldn't afford, even on the big allowance you gave me. I used to go home and hate the little house in the popular street where mother and Clay have seemed to be so happy. Oh, it sounds so tawdry—it is tawdry!" she amended bitterly.

"I think I understand," T. Q. prodded her gently. "Go on, Billy child."

"Don't speak like that to me, as if you still liked me!" Billy cried out in anguish. "I'm not worth it. Mr. Curtis, any more than Nyda and Winnie are. Can't you see I'm not? The same things happened to them that happened to me. Nyda was trapped. She was married to a man whom she came to despise, although I believe she still loved him. Men like Bruce Kruger and Ralph Truman and Gil Warburton made Eddie Banning seem pretty small."

"You're very fair, my dear," T. Q. said thoughtfully. "Oh, I've had many hours to think it all over!" she assured him bitterly. "Nyda must have been on pins and needles the whole time, wondering just when she would be exposed. Eddie gave her no peace the whole time. Of course he was getting five hundred a month out of you. I'm sure it was Eddie's scheme to rob the safe, and that Nyda was simply scared into helping him. Winnie had the same thing happen to her as happened to me. She couldn't bear the idea of going back to poverty and to clerking in the store. She knew she would never make a success as a private secretary—and what if she could have done so? The

most she could have earned the first year or so would have been thirty or thirty-five dollars a week and she'd been dressing on five hundred dollars a month! When she found that all her efforts to outdo herself to you, to make herself indispensable, had failed—"

"And do you know why it was you and not Winnie who won?" T. Q. interrupted her, with a quizzical smile breaking through his dejection.

"No," Billy answered, surprised. "I haven't had time to wonder—but I do wonder! I can't see why—"

"I've been fairly sure. It would be you since the first month," T. Q. told her gently. "You were the only one who had a genuine ambition, who had not resorted to a trick. You really wanted to be a violinist, you had genius, you were inherently a worthwhile person, a girl I could be proud of as my daughter. But Nyda and Winnie, sweet as I thought them, had tricked me in answering the question—naïve and in writing the essays—"

"Then—you knew all the time that Nyda didn't really want to be a kindergarten teacher and that Winnie would never be a real secretary, because she really didn't want to be?" Billy asked incredulously.

"Of course, my dear!" He smiled again, with a touch of his old humor. "I'm not such a fool as you girls may have thought me. I admit that during the year I have been sadly disappointed in you at times, because you did not make the most of your opportunity to study music—"

"I neglected it shamefully!" Billy cried. "I'd give you anything in the world to have the opportunity all over again—" But she interrupted herself, knowing that for the first time during that painful confession she had told a lie. She would not give anything in the world to have the year again, for more than she wanted fame she wanted love, and love meant—

"I have not changed my mind because of your dreadful confession," T. Q. said, with the smile still on his lips. "I still want you, Billy, as my daughter. I had hoped—once—that you might be my daughter-in-law, and that Presley Warburton would have won his wager as to all I would not go through with my scheme to adopt a daughter. But I suppose that is all off, my dear?"

"Yes," Billy answered in a low voice, and again she was surprised to feel the sharp stab of pain in her heart that always caught her when she thought of Clay Curtis. "But I—I can't do it, Mr. Curtis. I—oh, please, don't ask me to explain any more!"

"I was sure, absolutely sure," T. Q. went on, as if he had not heard her last words, "when I saw how you bore yourself under my unjust suspicions at the time of the safe robbery. It was then that I had Warburton draw up the papers on the adoption. Now that we understand each other so completely, Billy, can you give me any real reason why you don't want to go on?"

"I want to study music for as many years as you like," she said, "to Europe, if you wish, and I shall only ask that I may spend part of my time there with you. I am thinking of selling the store. This year has tired me out. It is not the same place, since jealousy and intrigue have become floor-walkers there," he admitted sadly.

Billy's resolution wavered. She was about to stretch out her hand to him in surrender when the thought of Dai Romaine restrained her. T. Q. thought he could trust her—utterly—but she knew that it was not for the sake of music that she had wanted to win the secret contest. She had wanted, these last months, to win so that she might be more desirable in Dai's eyes. She had wanted to be accepted by Dai Romaine. No, she could not accept T. Q.'s offer, for she knew that T. Q. disliked Romaine intensely.

She was not even tempted for a moment, after she had worked the thing out rapidly in her mind, to take T. Q.'s offer, no matter what effect her refusal would have upon Dai. If he loved her, he would want her for herself alone. Why had she decided that? Dai did not know of T. Q.'s plan to adopt one of the girls. He had proposed to her, knowing that at the end of the year she would again be a shop girl, without social standing or financial prospects. Of course he loved her! Could any girl ask for better proof?

"I can't accept your offer, Mr. Curtis," she said at last. "Please don't ask me to explain, though you have every right to—I have other plans for my life. Please don't look so—so sad, Mr. Curtis! Clay will come home soon. I'm sure of it. He has proved his point. He has made good independently of you. He will be a rich man, if he wants to be, and if he prefers to spend all his time writing great music, which does not pay well, except in soul satisfaction, he will hardly be such a fool as to insist on living in poverty. He can at least make enough money with an occasional popular song to pay his part of the living expenses here, and I am sure he will be happy and I am sure he will be happy."

"I wish I were sure of it!" T. Q. said sadly. Then he raised his head and squared his shoulders, as if accepting her decision heroically and determining to make the best of it. "I'm sorry, Billy. Strangely enough, I never liked you so well before. I hope you will be very happy, my child."

"May I leave today, Mr. Curtis?" she asked timidly, as they stood together, the old man's arm across her shoulders. "It won't be long for either of us—after today—"

"I suppose you are right, my dear," he agreed reluctantly.

"If Winnie and I both leave to-

Real Folks at Home (The Fire Eater)

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day, there will be less talk than if only Winnie left," she reassured him.

"There's the problem of Viola, the colored girl," T. Q. frowned. "I don't know how to keep her from gossiping."

"I have an idea," Billy grinned up at him with an effort at cheerfulness. "I seem to be very free with your money, Mr. Curtis, but I think it would be wise to pack Viola off to New York. She's been simply dying to go there, because her sweetie's living there now, and so is her married sister. Tell her you'll give her the trip to New York, plus a month's wages, if she'll sign a written agreement never to mention the events of today to anyone. If she gossiped in New York, there could be little harm come of it, but I'll guarantee she won't dare talk here before she goes, or write back home to any of her friends about it."

"Thank you, child," T. Q. said humbly. "I shall follow your advice in both cases. I can see that you would have been a great help to me as my daughter."

Billy flung her arms about his neck then, and kissed him on both cheeks. "You're a darling, and I love you, and I wish I could stay with you forever and ever. I can't thank you in words, but my heart is full of gratitude for all you have done for me—and wanted to do."

She ran from the room to keep from bursting into tears. As she started up the stairs her eyes glanced to glance at the great clock in the hall. Half-past six! Only half-past six! Lives had been wrecked and hearts broken since she had parted with Dai Romaine at five o'clock.

She sped up the stairs, her feet winged by an urgent necessity for haste. And as she flung open the door to her own room she was praying incoherently: "Please God, make him be there! Please God!"

Her voice trembled so when she

called a number on her telephone that she had to repeat it before the operator understood. It was long minutes—minutes packed with despair—before a soft, caressing voice answered.

(To be continued)

Romaine seems disappointed that Billy is leaving T. Q.'s home. Nevertheless, he tells her they will get married at once.

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THEATRES
ANTLERS THEATRE
Ritz Puts Betty "On the Fritz!"

The next time you decide to "fritz" someone, think before you act. Betty Bronson does it in her latest Paramount picture, Ellnor Glyn's "Ritz" and has a hard time righting things. You see, Betty plays the part of a rich man's spoiled daughter who is ready to sacrifice anything if only her husband can present a coronet as his wedding gift.

Along comes handsome James Hall who is really a duke. Betty feels a common bond but not knowing he's a nobleman, she repulses his adoration. However, Papa knows Hall's real identity and they decide to teach presumptuous daughter a lesson. Therefore, on the way to Europe, Betty is introduced to William Austin, masquerading as the Duke of Westborough and she immediately throws herself at his head (figuratively of course). To further complicate matters, Betty's cousin, John Standing, has grown to love Austin. What happens when all four are forced to remain on the same ocean liner for a week? You'll be surprised and then when they arrive in London—you'll be more than surprised! Dec-light-ed's thy word.

"Ritz" reaches the Antlers Theatre today. It represents Ellnor Glyn's successor to the Clara Bow production "It." In "Ritz" Madame Glyn steers clear of the "Three Weeks" type of story, replacing it with a blithe, wholesome tale of modern youth, its fads and foibles.

Liberty Theatre
East Recreated for Chaney Film
With strange China, elephants, jade-encrusted josses from the Orient, and brilliant ornaments of a far-off land, a Chinese garden and a section of a Chinese city were constructed in one of the most elaborate scenic undertakings in the history of screen studio, for "Mr. Wu." Lon Chaney's new starring vehicle playing at the Liberty Theatre.

The scene, representing the palace gardens of Wu, the emperor's mandarin played by Chaney, is an exact duplicate of a Chinese

palace garden, from magic walls designed to keep out the evil spirits to the glittering pagodas of Cathay.

Lon Chaney—man of a thousand faces—has given the screen a new disguise. He has disguised a human soul instead of a human face—this is the secret of "Mr. Wu."

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OREGON WHEAT OUTLOOK REGARDED FAVORABLE

(Associated Press Leased Wire.)

PORTLAND, Ore., June 8.—The weekly Oregon crop report today said most winter wheat is good to excellent though some has been replanted on account of frost in April. Spring wheat is mostly fair to good, though somewhat backward. It is heading in some of the milder districts, while in some elevated localities it has only recently come up.

The warmer weather and greater duration of sunshine has been favorable for fruit. Strawberries are being marketed in increasing quantities and some early cherries are turning color.

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