GIRL ALONE

By ANNE AUSTIN, AUTHOR OF "SAINT AND SINNER"

THIS HAS HAPPENED

The summer she is 16, Sally Ford, orphan, is "farmed out" to Clem Carson, farmer and severe taskmaster. There she meets David Nash, handsome student of scientific farming who is working on the Carson farm for the summer. David likes Sally and shows he prefers the little orphan to Pearl, Clem's daughter.

David is so enraged by Carson's insinuations about him and Sally that he strikes him, sending him crashing to the ground. Not knowing whether Carson is dead or not, Sally and David decide they must get away as quickly as possible. All that night they tramp through fields toward the town of Stanton. At daybreak they come to a railroad track and find a carnival train on the spur. Sally is overjoyed to see her friend, Eddie Cobb, a former orphan who ran away to join the carnival. She tells him their plight and he asks Winfield Bybee, owner of the carnival, to make a place for them. Bybee agrees and sends David to the cook's car. Mrs. Bybee, the real manager of the show, gives Sally the role of Princess Lalla, crystal gazer. Sally makes her first bow on the carnival platform. She is terrified to see Ross Willis, friend of Pearl Carson, come forward to have his fortune told.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XV

While Ross Willis, awkward and embarrassed, shuffled to the canvas chair which Gus, the spieler whisked forward, Sally reflected there was no need for her to remember any of the multitudinous instructions with which Mrs. Bybee had primed her for her job of "seeress."

She curved her small, brown painted, gilded-nailed hands over the crystal and bent her veiled face low. In a seductive, singsong voice she began to chant, bringing some of the words out hesitantly, as if English had been recently learned and came hard to her "Turkish" lips.

"I zee ze beeg fields—wheat fields, corn fields—ees it not so?" She raised her shaded eyes coyly to the face of the young farmer. The crowd pressed close, breathing hard, the odors of their breath and perspiration coming up on hot waves of summer air to the gayly dressed little figure on the platform.

"Yes'm, I mean sure, Princess," Ross Willis stuttered, and the crowd laughed, pressed closer still. Two or three women waved quarters to attract the attention of Gus, the spieler, who stood behind her, to aid her if necessary.

"You are—what you call it?—a farmer," Sally went on in her seductively deepened voice. Oh, it was fun to "play-act" and to be paid for it! "You va-ry reach young man. Var-ry beeg farm. You have mother, father, nl seester." Thank heavens, her ears had been keen that night of Pearl's party, even if she had been inarticulate with shyness! "You ar-re in love. I zee a gir-rl, a beeg pretty gir-rl with red hair an' blue eyes. Ees it not so?" Her little low laugh was a gurgle, which started a shout of laughter in the crowd.

"Yeah, I reckon so," Ross Willis admitted, blushing more violently than ever.

"Oh, you Pearl!" a girl's voice shrilled from the crowd.

"You mar-ry with thees gir-rl, have three var-ry nize childs," Sally went on delightedly. After all, why shouldn't Pearl marry Ross Willis, since she could not have David? "Zo! That ees all I zee," she concluded with sweet gravity. "Zee creestal she go dark now."

Ross Willis thanked "Princess Lalla" awkwardly and dropped from the platform to the grass-stubbled ground, entirely unaware that the marvelous seeress was little Sally Ford.

Confidence and mirth welled up in Sally. She began to believe in herself as "Princess Lalla," just as she had always more than half-believed that she was the queen of some actress whom she had imitated in the old days so recommended forever, when she had "play-acted" for the other orphans.

The next seeker after knowledge of "present and future" was not so easy, but not very hard either, for the applicant was a girl, a pretty, very urban-looking girl, who wore a tiny solitaire ring on her engagement finger and who had been clinging to the arm of an obviously adoring young man. For the pretty girl Sally obligingly foretold a happy marriage with a "dark, tall young man, va-ry handsome"; a long journey, and two children. The girl sparkled with pleasure, utterly unconscious of the fact that "Princess Lalla" had told her nothing of the past and very little of the present.

Quarters were thrust upon her thick and fast. Because of the brisk demand for her services, Sally gave only the briefest of "readings," and only a few muttered angrily that it was a swindle. To a middle-aged farmer she gave a bumper wheat crop, a new eight-cylinder car, a prospective son-in-law for the girl whom Sally had unerringly picked out as his unmarried daughter, and the promise of many splendid grandchildren. To a freckled, open faced, engaging youngster of 10, thrust upon the platform by his adoring mother, she grandly promised nothing less than the presidency of the United States, as well as riches and a beautiful wife.

Some of her prophecies, such as twin babies for the newly married couple, brought shouts of laughter from the crowd, and some of her vague guesses as to the past went very wide of the mark, as the applicants did not hesitate to tell her—the old maid, for instance, who looked so motherly that Sally lavishly endowed her with a husband and three children; but nearly everyone who paid a quarter for what "Princess Lalla" could see in the magic crystal went away wondering and thrilled and satisfied.

During the first lull between performances, Sally slipped out of the "Palace of Wonders" and daringly mingled with the crowds outside. It was all beautiful and wonderful to Sally, who had been to a circus only once in her life and never to a carnival before.

Before the tent which housed the big glass tank into which "bathing beauties" dived and in which they ate bananas and drank soda-pop under water, she encountered Winifield Bybee, enormous, majestic, benign, for it was a good crowd and a fine day, and money was pouring into his pockets.

"Well, well," he grinned down at her, "I hear from Gus that you're knocking 'em cold. Better run along in now, and you might see how many of the rubes you can make follow you into the Palace of Wonders. We don't want to give 'em too much of a free show. And remember, girlie, for every quarter Princess Lalla earns as a fortune teller, little Sally Ford gets a nickel for herself. Don't take many nickels to make a dollar."

"Oh, Mr. Bybee, I'm so happy I'm about to burst," Sally confided in him in a rush of gratitude. "But—do you think it's very wrong of me to pretend to be a crystal gazer when really I can't see a thing in it to save my life?"

Bybee bellowed with laughter, so that the crowd veered suddenly toward them. He stooped to whisper closer to her little brown-stained ear: "Don't you worry, sister. As old P. T. Barnum used to say, 'There's a sucker born every minute,' and old Winfield Bybee knows that they liked to be fooled. You just kid 'em along and send 'em away happy and I reckon the good Lord ain't going to waste any black ink on your record tonight. It's worth a quarter to be told a lot of nice things about yourself, ain't it?"

As she tripped swiftly across the dusty lot toward the Palace of Wonders, the crowd following her grew larger and larger. Becoming bolder because she felt that she was really "Princess Lalla" and not timid little Sally Ford, she deliberately flirted with the men men who pressed close upon her, even waved a little brown hand invitingly toward the big tent.

When she reached the tent door, the barker leaned down from his booth, behind which was set a small platform, and beckoned her to mount the narrow steps. Smilingly she did so, and the barker introduced her:

"Here she is, boys—the Princess Lalla of Con-stan-ti-no-ple, the prettiest girl that ever escaped from the Sultan's harem! Princess Lalla, favorite crystal-gazer to the Sultan of Turkey before she escaped from his harem, will tell your fortunes, la-dees and gen-tle-men! Princess Lalla sees all, knows all! Just one of the scores of attractions in the Palace of Wonders! Admission 25 cents, one quarter of a dollar, two bits!"

Sally bowed, her littlebrown hands spreading in an enchanting gesture; then she skipped down the steps, the great ropes of black hair, wound with strands of imitation pearls, flapping against the vivid green satin tunic.

She was very tired when the supper hour came, but the thought that she would soon see David again lent wings to her sandaled feet. She was about to hurry out of the Palace of Wonders, released at last by the apparently indefatigable spieler, Gus, when a tiny, treble voice called to her:

"Princess Lalla! Princess Lalla! Would you mind carrying me to the cars?"

Sally, startled, looked everywhere about the tent that was almost emptied of spectators before it dawned on her that the tiny voice had come from "Pitty Sing," "the smallest woman in the world," sitting in a child's little red rocking chair on the platform.

All of Sally's passionate love for little things—especially small children—surged up in her heart. She skipped down the steps of her own particular little platform and rad, with outstretched hands, to the midget. "Pitty Sing" was indeed a pretty thing, a very doll of a woman, the flaxen hair on her small head marcelled meticulously, her little plump cheeks and pouting, babyish lips tinted with rouge. In her miniature hands she was holding a newspaper, which was so big in comparison with her midget size that it served as a complete screen.

"Of course I'll carry you. I'm so glad you'll let me," Sally glowed and dimpled. "You little darling, you!"

"Please don't baby me!" Pitty Sing admonished her in a severe little voice. "I'm old enough to be your mother, even if I'm not big enough." And the tiny, plump hands began to fold the newspapers with great definiteness.

Sally's eyes, abashed, fluttered from the disapproving little face to the paper. Odd that so tiny a thing could read—but of course she was grown up, even if she was only 29 inches tall—

"Oh, please!" Sally gasped, going very pale under the brown powder. "May I see your paper for just a minute?"

For her eyes had caught sight of a name which had been burned into her memory, forever indelible—the name of Carson.

When Sally had carefully deposited the dignified little midget, "Pitty Sing," in the infant sized high chair drawn up to a corner table in the dining car, she hurried to the box of a kitchen which took up the other end of the car, the newspaper trembling in her hand. She found David alone in the kitchen, slicing onions into a great pan of frying Swiss steak. Onion-induced tears streamed down his cheeks, but at the sound of Sally's urgent voice, he turned.

"Oh, David, he wasn't killed!" she cried, taking care to keep her voice low. "It's in the paper—look! But he says, oh, David, he says the most terrible things about us, and the police are looking for us—"

"Hey, there, honey! Steady!" David commanded gently, as he groped for a handkerchief to wipe his streaming eyes. "Now, let's see the paper. Thank God I didn't commit murder—what the devil!" he interrupted himself, as his eyes traveled hurriedly down the front page. "By heaven, I almost wish I had killed him!" The dirty, lying skunk!"

"FARMER ACCUSES HIRED MAN OF ASSAULT TO KILL," was the streamer head-line across the entire page. Below, two streamer lines of heavy italic type informed the reader: "CLEM CARSON SUFFERS BROKEN LEG FOR ATTEMPTING TO PROTECT ORPHANED GIRL FROM UNIVERSITY STUDENT WORKING ON FARM."

The "story," in small type, followed: "Clem Carson, prosperous farmer, living 18 miles from the capital city, is suffering from a broken leg, a broken nose and numerous cuts and bruises, sustained late Saturday afternoon when, Carson alleges, he broke into the garret bedroom of Miss Sally Ford, 16-year-old girl from the state orphanage, who was working on the Carson farm for her board during the summer vacation. According to Carson's story, told to reporters Sunday night after a warrant for the arrest of Sally Ford and David Nash had been issued by the sheriff's office, the farmer had been suspicious for several days that one of his hired men, David Nash, A. & M. student during the school year, was paying too marked attention to the young girl, for whose safety Carson had pledged himself to the state.

"On Saturday afternoon early the members of Mr. Carson's family including his wife, brother, mother and daughter, had come to town for shopping, leaving Miss Ford alone in the house. The two other hired men had also gone to the city, leaving Carson and young Nash at work on the farm. Carson alleges that he saw Nash enter the house late Saturday afternoon and that when the young man did not return to his work in the barn within a reasonable time, Carson left his own work to investigate, fearing for the safety of the girl under his protection.

"After unsuccessfully searching the main floor of the house, Carson alleges, he went to the garret, heard voices coming from Miss Ford's room, tried the door and found it locked. He knocked, was refused admittance, according to the story told the sheriff, then, determined to save the girl from the man he climbed to the roof of the porch and made his way to the small window of the great room, from which he saw Miss Ford and the Nash boy in a compromising position. When he tried to enter the room through the window Carson alleges that he was brutally assaulted by young Nash, who, by the way, was boxing champion of the sophomore class at A. & M. A smashing blow from young Nash's fist sent the farmer crashing through the window, and down the sloping roof to the ground.

"In the fall, Carson's left leg was broken above the knee. He was still unconscious when Dr. John E. Salter, a physician living 10 miles from the Carson farm on the road to the capital, arrived at the deserted farm, summoned by a mysterious male voice by telephone. The sheriff's theory, as well as the doctor's, is that young Nash, fearful that he had seriously injured the farmer, summoned medical help before leaving with the girl.

"A warrant for the arrest of David Nash has been issued by the sheriff, charging the young student with assault with intent to kill and with contributing to the delinquency of a minor. The warrant for Miss Ford's arrest charges moral delinquency. Since she is a ward of the state until her eighteenth birthday, she is also liable to arrest on the simple charge of running away from the farm on which the state orphanage authorities had placed her for the summer."

Sally, trembling so that her teeth chattered, watched David as he read the entire story. His young face became more and more grim as he read. When he had finished the shameful, hideously untrue account of what had really been a piece of superb gallantry on his part, he crumpled the paper slowly between the fingers of his big hand as if that had been crushing out the life of the man who had lied so monstrously. Then, lifting a lid of the big coal range, he thrust the crumpled mass of paper into the flames.

"But—what are we going to do, David?" Sally whispered, her eyes searching his grim face piteously. "They'll send me to the reformatory if they catch me, and you—you—oh, David! They'll send you to prison for years and years! I wish you'd never laid eyes on me! I'd rather die than have you come to harm through me."

She sagged against the narrow shelf which served as a kitchen table, weeping forlornly.

"Don't cry Sally," David pleaded gently. "It's not your fault. I'd do it all over again if anyone else dared insult you. Oh, the devil! These onions are burning up! Skip along now and don't worry. I'm cook tonight. Buck's on a spree. Keep a stiff upper lip honey. In all that brown paint and that rig, you could walk into the sheriff's office and he'd do nothing worse than ask you to read his palm."

"But you, David, you!" she protested, trying to choke off her sobs. "You're not disguised—"

"I'll stick to the kitchen. Nobody'll think of looking for me here." He grinned at her cheerfully. "Remember, Pop Bybee's on our side. He took us in when he thought I'd killed a man. I don't suppose he'll turn on us now, particularly since you're such a riot as Princess Lalla. I've been hearing how big you're going over in the Palace of Wonders."

"Honestly, David?" she brightened. "Do you like me dressed up like this?" and she made him a little curtsey.

"You sweet, sweet kid!" he laughed at her tenderly. "Like you like that? You're adorable! But I like your own wild-rose complexion better. Now scoot or I'll be put in irons for spoiling the supper."

Sally fled, but not before she had blown him an audacious kiss from the tips of her gilded-nailed fingers.

Winfield Bybee had entered the dining car during her talk with David and was seated at his own table, his thin, hatchet-faced wife opposite him. When he saw his new "Princess Lalla" almost skipping down the aisle, her eyes sparkling with joy at David's unexpected praise and tenderness, he muttered something to Mrs. Bybee, then beckoned the fantastically clad little figure to his table.

"Would her royal highness honor me and Mrs. Bybee with her presence at dinner this evening?" he boomed, his blue eyes twinkling.

When she had seated herself, after a little flurry of thanks, Bybee leaned toward her and spoke in a confidential undertone: "Me and the wife have seen that piece in the papers about you and Dave, Sally. What about it? Who's lying? You and the boy—or Carson?"

Sally had turned the little black lace veil back upon the jeweled-gilt crown, so that her big eyes showed like two round, polished sapphires set in bronze. Bybee, searching them with his keen, pale blue eyes, could find in them no guile, no cloud of guilt.

"David and I told you the truth, Mr. Bybee," she said steadily, but her lips trembled childishly. "You believe us, don't you? David is good, good!"

"All right," Bybee nodded his acceptance of her truthfulness. "Now what was that you was telling me and the wife about your mother?"

Sally's heart leaped with hope. "She—my mother—lived here in Stanton, Mr. Bybee. I have her address, the one she gave the orphanage 12 years ago when she put me there. But Miss Pond, who works in the office at the Home, said they had investigated and found she had moved away right after she put me in the orphanage. But I thought—I hoped—I could find out something while I'm here. But I suppose it would be too dangerous—I might get caught—and they'd send me to the reformatory—"

"Haven't I told you I'm not going to let 'em bother you?" Bybee chided her, beetling his brows in a terrific frown. "Now, my idea is this—"

"My idea, Winfield Bybee!" his wife interrupted tartly. "Always taking credit! That's you all over! My idea, Sally, is for me to scout around the neighborhood where your mother used to live and see if I can pick up any information for you. Land knows a girl alone like you needs some folks of her own to look after her. Wouldn't do for you to go around asking questions, but I'll make out like I'm trying to find out where my long-lost sister, Mrs. Ford, is. What was her first name? Got that, too!"

"Her name was Nora," Sally said softly. Mrs. Nora Ford, aged 28 then—12 years ago. Oh, Mrs. Bybee, you're both so good to me! Why are you so good to me?" she added ingenuously.

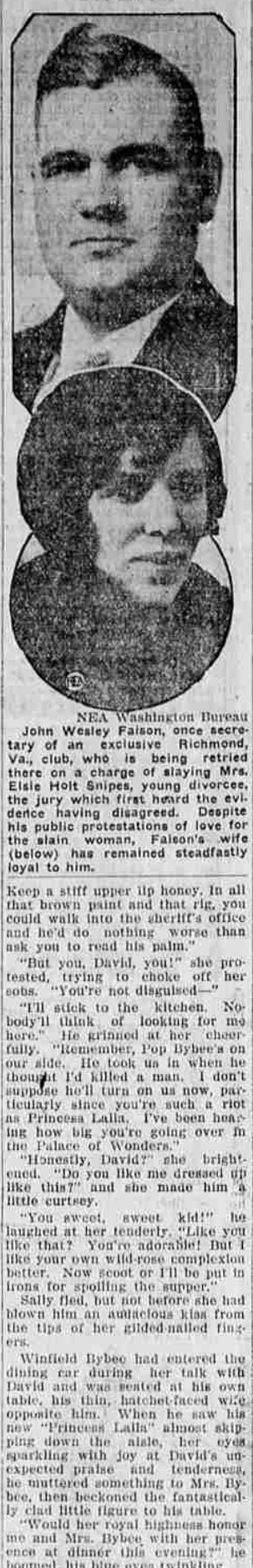
"Maybe," Mrs. Bybee answered brusquely, "it's because you're a sweet kid, without any flirty nonsense about you. That is," she added severely, her sharp grey eyes flicking from Sally's eager face to Bybee's, "you'd better not let me catch you making eyes at this old Tom Cat of mine!"

"Now, Ma," Bybee flushed and squirmed, "don't tease the poor kid. Can't you see she's clear gone on this Dave chap of hers? She wouldn't even know I was a man if I didn't wear pants. Don't mind her, Sally. She's your friend, too, and she'll try to get on your ma's tracks tomorrow morning before show time."

(To Be Continued)

All are not friendly in the carnival. In the next chapter Sally finds an enemy.

Retired



NEA Washington Bureau

John Wesley Falson, once secretary of an exclusive Richmond, Va., club, who is being retried there on a charge of slaying Mrs. Elsie Holt Snipes, young divorcee, the jury which first heard the evidence having disagreed. Despite his public protestations of love for the slain woman, Falson's wife (below) has remained steadfastly loyal to him.

New Face Powder Popular

MELLO-GLO is a wonderful new shade—youth color. Perspiration hardly affects it and it will not leave the skin dry and drawn. Try this new French Process Face Powder and enjoy its marvelous beautifying qualities. Sticks well, stays on longer and does not clog the pores. You will surely love MELLO-GLO. Nathan Fullerton.

Air to Arias

Miss Paula George of San Francisco entertained thousands of radio fans by her singing; and one night a theatrical producer chanced to be listening in as she sang. He liked her voice; she liked the three-year vaudeville and stage contract he proffered. Now she's "off the air."

STATE PRESS COMMENT

Last Call for Prunes

Four important agencies have agreed upon a plan which will go before the representatives of a $35,000,000 Oregon industry at Dallas, in Polk county, Saturday.

They will submit to prune growers an outline which calls for cooperative marketing and the use of federal warehousing and financing facilities. They will recommend the expansion of the North Pacific Cooperative Prune exchange, which has spent four years building a foundation on which growers in Oregon and Southwestern Washington may advance the industry.

The agencies which have joined at the end of much discussion are the federal bureau of economics, the state market agent, the extension division of Oregon State college and the marketing department of the Portland Chamber of Commerce.

But plans which represent the ablest minds and the best experience are helpless plans unless another factor is added. There will be no cooperative marketing of an important fruit crop in Oregon unless the growers cooperate. There will be no organization if all the work is left to those who, after all, are outsiders.

The prune industry in Oregon passes through a marketing crisis each year. Losses have been more frequent than gains since the end of the World-war. Growers must in the majority depend upon chance and the whim of the market whether they receive cost of production, a profit or a loss.

And yet the national market has never been fully supplied with Oregon prunes, which are the best prunes. The foreign market has never reached the saturation point. Cooperative marketing and competent selling can take the place of chance. But leaders with the best plan in the world can go only so far. The growers must adopt, put into action and be loyal if they would substitute method for madness.—Portland Journal.

Fighting the Peddler

There is an announcement in this issue of the Herald from business men's organization representatives who desire to extend an organization throughout the county for the purpose of promoting the square deal in retail business.

By "Square deal" we understand to be meant fair, legitimate prices of merchandise and service to the consumer and a guarantee of quality to those who buy.

The sweep of the grafter and itinerant "salesman" is now on all over the county and inferior goods with no service marks any deal with a consumer. Usually a little car, a patent leather haired sheik and a bunch of silk hose or other light stuff constitutes the equipment and personnel of one of those marvelous "direct selling agencies" they talk about.

The Evening Herald is not preaching trade at home because home business supports schools, churches and government. We waive that old and substantial argument, and ask those who buy to look at the matter in purely a selfish manner—that of getting something for the money spent. In thinking it over remember the "Persian" rug hounds here a short time ago; remember the "stolen cloth" artists who worked quite a few MEN. Think of that, ladies, actually worked the men—a thing that was thought impossible. Then, too, there is the fountain pen lad who tells you that Waterman overproduced a few years ago and the surplus is offered at a cut rate. Oh, you could quote a hundred different grafts that are worked here and elsewhere in Oregon at certain intervals.

Merchants and professional men not only suffer from the business taken out of legitimate trade channels, but they suffer along with the people who get stung on poor goods and poor service; confidence is shaken every time the grafters run their sheik cars into this territory, and it requires some time for the legitimate dealer who is here the year round to repair the damage.

That is why a county wide organization is being formed by the business and professional men. It is not a price fixing organization nor is it an organization to either discuss or attempt to direct the actions of any concern that is permanently located, but it is intended to start a campaign of information on the grafter and the transient bum who is trying to extract a living from the people of Klamath Basin without working for it.—Klamath Falls Herald.

AND TURN TO

FIRST SAILOR: How do you like life in the navy? Quite a few turns for a fellow to get used to?

SECOND SAILOR: I should say so. At night you turn in, and just as you are about to turn over somebody turns up and shouts "Turn out!"—Tit-Bits.

Eat barbecue sandwiches and live forever. Brand's Road Stand.