

The Flapper Who Found Herself

By Inez Haynes Irwin

Flutter, Chatter, Laughter—Letty Lacked These Magic Gifts of Flapperdom Until She Made the Great Discovery

WHEN Letty opened the door of her sister's house her eyes fell first on a letter on the hall floor. It had come through the quaint slit in the quaint door, and it lay face up. It was almost as though somebody, softly welcoming, had called her name, for the envelope was addressed to her.

Letty picked it up; walked into the room at her right, tearing it open.

"Dear Miss Mannering: I am more sorry than I can say that I cannot keep my promise to Margaret to spend the coming three days with you. I stumbled on the stairs last night and sprained my ankle, which will, of course, keep me indoors for many days. But I want you to come at once to stay with me—here at my boarding house—until your sister comes back. I am so sorry that this accident happened; for, aside from the pain and inconvenience to myself, I did hope to show you something of Boston before Margaret's return. But as it is, I can only direct you what to do. Cordially, "ADELINE BURTON."

"P. S.—I should have said first of all, of course, that Margaret was very well when she left, but heartbroken that the sudden call to New York took her away during the first days of your visit."

Letty read the letter twice; sat down with it in her hands. She became conscious—she could not ignore it—of a soft sense of relief, the first faint melting of an inner tension. Most poignantly she yearned to be with Margaret and Paul—she had seen neither since their marriage last June—but even more she yearned to be alone for a while. She wanted to make a little mental survey of herself. She wanted to consider a problem which in the last year had loomed larger and heavier in her consciousness; a problem that during her visit to Dora Elwell had developed malignant weight and ache. She did not want to go to this unfamiliar Miss Burton. She did not want to go anywhere where there would be strangers.

She glanced about her—from the tiny drawing room to the tinier dining room, to the even tinier hall. How quaint it was—Margaret had written that her little two-storied, six-roomed house was older than anything in their own flourishing middle western city—and it looked every year of its great age. Yet how hospitable, with Margaret's share of her mother's things giving it a poignant familiarity, Margaret's wedding presents making it gay!

The many-paned windows of the drawing room were on a line with the shoulders of the passersby. But how few there were of these; and what a friendly street—so narrow and curving, with trees here and there; a great murmurous, fragrant linden at their very door! She would not—could not—be afraid of solitude in these doll-house surroundings. Her mind suddenly snapped to resolution. She would stay alone there. And on the impetus of that first snap she wrote a sympathetic and appreciative letter to Miss Burton, declining her hospitality.

There was ice in the ice box; bread in the bread box; cake in the cake box; milk, and there were, in addition, eggs, oranges, honey, lettuce, strawberries—all she might need for dinner and breakfast. Letty rummaged into this squat-doored cubbyhole of a closet; into that slim-doored, long-paneled one. The joy of youth in the adventure was settling into palpitation all kinds of emotional currents in her mind. Oh, if only they would wash her problem away! But the problem stayed—like a worry-logged chest, caught so fast on the floor of her mind that no current, however happy, could stir it. Must she think of it now?

On her question the bell rang—her trunk. She began feverishly to unpack it in the square back guest chamber.

"I feel as though I ought to take out a family of dolls and a set of dolls' furniture," she said to herself. "If I only knew a little girl in this neighborhood I believe I'd buy a lot of toys and go straight to playing house!"

But what emerged from the trunk—"flapper stuff," her brother described it—was lace and ribbon-trimmed piles of lingerie that went into bureau drawers, organdy and taffeta flims of gowns that went on hangers into the closet; a bathing suit, a tennis racket, sport shoes, sleeveless sweaters in every color, tams to match.

She disposed of them all with a neatness so long drawn out and meticulous that time withered away before it. Dusk approached and she flew feverishly to the preparation of her supper. Cold, abbreviated—that took but 15 minutes—in the eating of it less. The problem stirred. In another instant it would float up to the surface of her mind. To what should she turn now—reading? Rummaging among Margaret's book shelves, she came across one of the year's literary sensations. She plunged into it.

It could not hold her, though. Her eyes running swiftly along the print, ate up the pages; but at the end of the first chapter her mind was a blank. She tried another book, and another, and another. No use; the hour had struck. And on her recognition of the fact that worry-logged chest pulled up its anchor, floated straight up to the surface of her mind—caught immovably there. She threw the book down, angled her elbows on the window seat, cupped her chin in her hands, looked at her problem square.

Yes, her visit to the Elwell's had been a complete failure. Out of the dozen young people who formed the house party, she alone was not a success as a guest. What was it that made her different from other girls? Or was she, Oh, was she what Bob called a dumb bird?

Why was it that the instant a boy entered the room she turned tongue-tied? She liked boys, and how much she wanted them to like her she could not tell! Not



Inside the case lay a single cigarette.

that she desired them to be mushy! All she asked was that they pick her for a partner for tennis, for golf—above all, for dancing. But it was obvious that they liked to do none of these things with her. On the other hand, that they liked so much to do them with Dora that they almost fought for the privilege. What was it Dora had that she lacked? Or, what was it she had from which Dora was free? In her heart she knew well enough what her handicap was. Her inevitable, her inescapable, her horrible shyness! What a blight that shyness laid on her! It descended the instant a male (under 20) entered the room—descended like a fog—a fog so heavy, so soggy, so gluey that it bound her body, choked her speech, slowed her thought, muted her vision.

Dora bore no such social burden. In the two weeks that Letty had spent with the Elwells—a two weeks in which the house was overrun with boys—Dora had always been the dominating figure. Letty, silent, heavy—ever thinking that in another instant she would break into that stream of chatter which flowed in a starred rainbow-colored torrent between Dora and the boys—never once succeeded in doing it. It was as though she were a piece of furniture standing inert there. What was the quality in Dora that produced the flutter, chatter, laughter? Why hadn't she it?

In the meantime a wan dusk, attended by a pale crescent of new moon, tentatively descended. Outside Letty's window the linden kept up its friendly murmur, poured on her its delicious perfume. A syringa bush, in the tiny slit of garden across the way, waited odorously welcome. A single spear point of diamond-tipped silver pricked through the sky. Suddenly over the sky surged waves of stars. A cool evening slid into the place of the warm day. A group of children, making the most of the meager hour before bedtime, materialized from nowhere.

A trio of girls, welded by their interlocked arms into one group, walked up and down. Pairs of absorbed lovers passed. Fragments of their talk, strangely close, flew in at Letty's window. They deepened a strain of melancholy that wound in and out of Letty's reflections.

Some girls were not only social failures at first but all their lives. Social success had nothing to do with being pretty, wearing charming clothes, having a nice family and a delightful home. She herself had so much. In boarding school, for instance, she had even rated higher than Dora for looks. How could she avoid realizing that, when everybody told her so! And, indeed, she knew she was not plain. It all came down again to that something, compact of flutter, chatter, laughter, that Dora had and she hadn't.

There were other things a girl could do—social settlement and charitable work. Hadn't she better make up her mind now to retire from the world and devote herself to the poor? She had always hoped that she might marry and—have a family—a quite large family—two boys and two girls. But manifestly she could not marry unless somebody asked her. Equally nobody would ask her unless he fell in love with her. And he couldn't fall in love if he didn't even notice that she was in the room!

She must signal to him that she was there! But she had no signals—not a single one. It must be, she decided, a retirement from the world, service to the poor. She pitied babies most, and old people. But, oh, never to swim or play tennis or dance again!

A tear splashed off the round of her cheek. Others followed. She put her arms down on the window sill and her head on her arm. Gradually the romping children retired from the street. The giggling girls withdrew. But all the time the linden murmured and the syringa poured its perfume on her. Her eyelids fluttered, closed.

She awoke suddenly; awoke with a start—awoke with a paralyzing sense of terror. Somebody seemed with awkward, inept fingers to be fumbling at the screen. Trembling violently, she pulled herself upright. Followed a detonation which, rasping across her sleep-filmed ear drums, sounded in the midnight silence as loud as an explosion. But the orange-tawny flash which trailed it revealed that it was only the scrape against the clapboard of a match. It revealed something

else—the head and shoulders of a man—a lad tall and ready.

It was he who had lighted the match. And now, head down, he shielded the flame with his hands until it burned steadily; lifted it to the cigarette in his mouth. He took a rapid puff or two and then, while still the match burned—perhaps drawn by the steadiness of Letty's gaze—he looked up.

He stood, stock still, and stared at Letty.

She sat, stock still, and stared at him. Letty saw a tall, slim lad with a cheek innocent of beard, as smooth and warmly colored as an apple. His black hair, flowing straight up from a rectangle of white forehead under the pushed-back straw hat, showed the beginning of one of those permanent waves with which nature so often dowens ungrateful masculinity. His eyes were brown, steady and clear, the lashes turned so far back that their curling tips seemed ready to prick through his eyelids. His face tapered down to an indeterminate boy mouth and ended with surprising firmness in a square of chin.

He saw what—framed by the square of the screen—might have looked to sophistication like a portrait of a young girl; a wistful blonde face which would have shown a certain piquancy of tip-tilted nose and cleft chin if the hour and the blur of tears and its own innocence had not rendered it poignant. The disarranged hair dropped in trail tangles and airy wisps of gold on to her forehead and over her ears. Nevertheless, the clear gray of her candid eyes carried through the tangle. And nothing veiled the faint color in her soft cheek or the intense one on her warm lips.

The lad gazed and gazed as though spellbound. And, equally magnetized, Letty gazed and gazed. Suddenly he jumped, looked down at his hand. The forgotten match had burned to the flesh. He dropped the stub, murmured a confused "I beg your pardon," and moved on.

He was the only person on the street. Letty listened to his footsteps. They stopped a few houses on; where, she conjectured, he relighted the neglected cigarette. The footsteps started again; became staccato in their rapidity; then hurried off into the silence. Letty listened also to a nearby clock which almost instantly struck 12. Other clocks took up their midnight responsibilities, and she listened to them, too. But all the time she was listening most intently to the clamor of her own thoughts.

What they were saying she did not exactly get. She realized only that she felt extraordinarily light and cheerful. After a while she arose, stretched, yawned, smiled. "You'd better go to bed, miss," she advised herself. "You're sleepy and tired! And, remember, no foolishness about being alone in this angel of a house! Now go into the dining room and kitchen and see that everything's locked here!" She obeyed herself.

"Now try the front door and see that it's locked!"

Again she obeyed herself. "Now take the screens out of the windows in the front room, close windows; lock windows! Number one done! Now number two. Hello, what's this?"

This was something that her hand struck just outside on the window ledge—something small and boxlike, cool, and satin smooth. She lighted the candle on a nearby table. It was a cigarette case of gunmetal studded with turquoises.

"Oh, Paul, I've certainly got one on you!" Letty glibbed at her absent brother-in-law. "What a goop! Think of leaving such a lovely thing where any passerby might steal it! I suppose he sat there smoking and just forgot all about it." She pressed the spring. Inside lay a single cigarette.

She took her find upstairs to her room—for safekeeping, she told herself—spread it open on the top of the old-fashioned bureau. She did not go to bed immediately, however. For suddenly she found she was not sleepy at all. Besides, with equal suddenness, temptation—a mighty one, a gay one—swooped out of the air; upon her. She sat down at the mirror and examined the case all over again.

She slept soundly until 6. Then, for some unaccountable reason, she awoke

with a start. She tried to hypnotize herself into sleep again, for she realized that a long day lay before her, and for an equally unaccountable reason that day looked lonely. But her system of hypnosis did not work, and presently she jumped up, dressed; drew on one of the little gingham gowns that hung in the closet.

Downstairs in the microscopic kitchen she built a fire; put water on to boil. She set the tete-a-tete dining room table with scrupulous care; one flowered saucer on a flowered plate for strawberries; a second flowered saucer on a flowered plate for breakfast food; a flowered egg cup; three of the slender, dented silver spoons that Margaret and she had teathed on. While she waited for the water to boil she went into the drawing room, opened the windows, and put in the screens. The odor of the linden mingled with the syringa and poured a heady volume of perfume into the room. In the garden opposite a robin was calling. She leaned out. The narrow slit of sky showed a warm blueness but the morning air struck cool on her cheek. The street looked dead; all the houses were blanked by drawn curtains and there was only one person in sight. Idly she followed him with her gaze—a man, no, a boy.

He was coming slowly along, stopping at each house and examining the ledges of all the ground floor windows. What an extraordinary proceeding! Yet there was something vaguely familiar about him. Where had she seen him before? On a flash she remembered. It was the young man who had lighted a cigarette under her window. But what in the world was he doing? Why—why, he was looking for something! What did he expect to find on window ledges?

Suddenly it came to her. Of course. The cigarette case belonged not to Paul but to him. It was the touch of the case against the screen as he deposited it on the window ledge that had awakened her. She rushed frantically upstairs; tore frenziedly downstairs. She opened the front door and stood on the threshold panting, listening to the footsteps that slowly came nearer and nearer.

Closer he drew. She heard him stop at the first of the drawing room windows; then at the second. He passed the doorsteps; cast a casual glance upwards—stopped and stared as Letty held out the cigarette case to him.

"I—I beg your pardon," Letty faltered, "are—are you looking for this?" "Yes—I—I am!" The lad faltered, too. "I'm much obliged to you for—keeping it for me. You see, I rested it on the window ledge last night while I lighted my cigarette."

"Yes. I—I found it a few minutes later when I—I took the screen out," Letty explained, still faltering, "but I—I—thought that Paul, my brother-in-law, had left it there."

"I sorta—hated—to lose it," the boy explained. "My—my sister gave it to me last Christmas."

"It's awfully pretty," Letty managed to say after a long stop. "I—I just adore gunmetal things—anyway."

The tongue-tied feeling was invading her. Flutter! Chatter! Gesture. Why couldn't she? Why couldn't she? Again there was pause. Then the lad broke it.

"I—I missed it the moment I got home, but I—I—knew I'd left it on your window ledge. I—I couldn't seem to remember what part of the street it was in, though. That's why I came to look for it so early. I—I was afraid people would take me for a burglar or a—or a lunatic, or—or something!"

His halting speech came to an end. Letty tried to think of something to say, but the tongue-tied feeling had all of her now. The lad took up the conversation with a new and freer impulse.

"Besides, my last cigarette was in it. My—my mother made me promise that I'd only smoke three cigarettes a day until I was 21. I—I—can't tell you how I have been thinking of that smoke as I walked along." He came to a pause.

Letty's silence was a frozen one, but a very fever began to invade her cheeks. He seemed to cast about him for more talk, found none, and in default of it pressed the spring of the cigarette case. The cover flew open. Paul's blush was a crimson that paled Paul Harvard's banner hanging in the hall behind her. Her mer-

cul lids dropped over her horrified eyes. "Why, it's gone!" the lad exclaimed. "That's funny. I was sure there was one here." He slipped the case into his pocket.

Letty faced him full. All the spiritual temptation of a long line of Puritan ancestry looked out of her eyes, but all their triumphs over those temptations rang in her tone. "You are not mistaken," she said, "there was a cigarette in it. I—I—smoked it."

The boy stared speechless. He tried to speak, but words would not come. A crimson flush painted his cheek that faded Letty's blush as Letty's blush had paled the Harvard flag. Some trained impulse in Letty took up its instinctive work. "Wait a moment, please," she dropped in a fainting voice. She turned and fled up the stairs. In an instant she was back again, her white skin still showing banners of crimson. She held out her trembling hand to the boy. In it was a case of silver opened to show files of cigarettes. "Please take one," she begged. "Take a lot! They're my brother Paul's."

The boy docilely took the case from her, extracted a single cigarette, put it between his lips, tried to light it. His fingers made awkward work with the match at first. "This is a pretty cigarette case," he finally breathed, but he said it as one who is unconscious of his own words.

"Yes," Letty answered. "Paul bought it in Nuremberg." For an answer she surveyed a mental blankness in which was no word. Then, as an inspiration. "It's—it's very old."

Ensued a hollow pause in which neither cigarette nor cigarette case offered conversational inspiration to Letty.

"Do—do—you know," the lad finally broke the silence in a voice that seemed to have absorbed some of its hollowness, "of any—any—place round here where I—I—could get my breakfast? I'm—I'm—a stranger in Boston."

"I'm so sorry," Letty breathed, "but I—I don't. I'm—I'm a stranger, too."

"Oh!" The lad removed his hat. "Thank you for finding my cigarette case. Good-by."

"Good-by!" Letty said—and closed the door.

Letty fell after breakfast into an orgy of work. She washed her dishes. She made her bed. She dusted the entire house. But these tasks took only a small portion of her morning—and through them all that scarlet shame hotly seared her consciousness.

In the afternoon she wandered futilely about the west end streets for a while. But walking alone was an unsatisfactory process. Her eye did not long contemplate what it fell upon. Her memory kept going back to that fatal cigarette. She returned to the house, tried again to read, again failed, fell into reverie. Flutter . . . chatter . . . laughter. To retire from the world. Very little babies and old, old people. That cigarette . . . If she could only see him again to wash away the impression of the social horror she had committed. She would ask nothing more of fate—the chance to talk with him once. She invented nimble wonders of repartee and epigram to scatter along the conversational way.

The afternoon dragged its slow length away to twilight. Letty's thoughts dragged with it. After a while, not because she was hungry, but for diversion, she began to cook her lonely dinner. Suddenly there came a sharp peal of the bell. Who could that be? Not Margaret! She was not due till day after tomorrow. Letty ran to the door. The haze of the cigarette case—panting and flushed, but an eager light in his eye—was standing on the steps.

"O—I'm—I'm so—I'm glad to find you in," he stammered, remembering, after an instant, to take his hat off. "A little while ago I put my hand in my pocket and found your brother's cigarette case. I don't know how I happened to steal it on you. I—I ran all the way here. I hope he hasn't missed it."

"O, no," Letty answered, taking the cigarette case. Words of explanation came in a rush. "He's away. So's my sister. I'm all alone in the house. They won't come back until day after tomorrow. I hadn't missed cigarette case yet." Her mind started glibly on her carefully rehearsed monologue. "The reason why I smoked that cigarette was just exactly this," but her lips refused to take up the words. The tongue-tied feeling was coming over her again, invading her like a heavy, slow tide. O, flutter . . . chatter . . . laughter.

A thin, gray silence seemed to settle between them.

"I'm glad you hadn't—I'm glad you didn't think—I—I thought you had hated to have you—have you think I'd stolen your case when you—when you—when you'd just given mine back to me."

The tongue-tied feeling had her tight. "Thank you," oozed stupidly out of it. But that—of the volume she had to say to him—was all Letty's tongue would tackle.

"I—I found a place to eat," he went on, retreating backward down the steps. "Not—not good—but all—all right. Good-by."

"Good-by!" Letty managed to say as he vanished. But an instant later, upstairs in her room, flat on her bed with her head lost in pillows, she was articulate enough—even through her sobs.

"Idiot—dummy—blockhead—lemon—donkey—nunny—prune—fish," were some of the epithets she hurled at herself. "You had your chance. Why didn't you take it? O you are a dumb bird!" Her sob-broken accusing apostrophe kept up until hunger dragged her downstairs.

After dinner she tried in various ways to rouse her spirits. She mixed a loaf of bread. She looked over Margaret's collection of foreign photographs. She knitted frantically on her new henna colored sweater. She wrote in her diary. She made out the accounts of her allowance which a stern father demanded of her every month. She played on the piano and even sang the latest jazz. But none of these occupations really helped. The tears kept coming.

Finally the clock struck eleven. "Now you go to bed young woman," she commanded herself with a feeble, jaded determination. "And no more foolishness about people you'll never see

again as long as you live! Go into the dining room and kitchen and see that everything's locked there."

She obeyed herself. "Now try the front door and see that that's locked."

Again she obeyed herself. "Now take the screens out of the window in the front room; close windows; lock windows. Number one done! Now two! Hello—what's—"

But Letty did not add this. This time her tone was not inquiry—only surprise; ecstatic, rapturous surprise. Her hand had struck something outside the window—something small and boxlike that felt cool and satin smooth. But that was not all she found.

For as she stood there holding the gunmetal cigarette case in her hand a lightning flash of intuition zigzagged across her mind. Why, he was shy, too—shy as she—shyer! He had wanted to be invited to call, but he couldn't bring his lips to . . .

While she had wrestled with the tongue-tied feeling, he had, too. He was so shy that he had to play this trick to show how he felt! He was so shy that he had never realized that she was shy. Why, if he were shy . . .

A sudden conviction pulled taut in her mind.

If he were shy with her she never would be shy with him. Never! Never! The thought of his shyness miraculously evaporated hers. Flutter . . . chatter . . . laughter.

A dazzling idea fire rocketed through her mind. He would call for his cigarette case in the morning. She would invite him to lunch . . . dinner . . . lunch . . . dinner . . . till Margaret came home. Another dazzling idea broke. She would never explain about the cigarette. He had come back believing she smoked. Somehow that brought out in her a curious confidence, a sparkle of sophistication. Flutter . . . chatter . . . laughter. Well, watch her!

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Politeness Does Pay—You May Receive a Fortune, Too.

(Continued From First Page.)
cued and reformed, dies in Chicago and leaves Kidd \$425,000.

Kidd changes his name to Byrnes and becomes an itinerant preacher.

Episode Five.

The entrance to the Brooklyn bridge, New York city. Rush hour. Thousands and thousands pushing, slipping, laughing, swearing their way toward home. An automobile stops right at the entrance to the driveway and a man in it beckons to Policeman Francis E. Caddell, 34 years on the force, the human encyclopedia of the New York police department.

"Listen, friend," said the man. "Twenty years ago you met a boy who was broke and down on his luck. You took him down to Barney Flynn's saloon on Pell street and bought him a meal. Then you fitted him out with clothing from head to foot. And now that very boy is here before you, Caddell, and I want to know if you will come out with me to California, where I now own a canning factory. I'll give you an easy job at \$10,000."

When he recovers from his surprise Caddell agrees to go. Today he is out there with his friend. He keeps the identity of the man he benefited a secret.

Brazil Offers Good Market.

Sioux City Journal.
Captains of industry need not worry over having no more worlds to conquer when they turn their eyes toward some of the South American republics and consider their vastness and possibilities. Brazil, with a bigger area than continental United States and a population of 30,000,000, ought to be considered as a market worth trying for.



Walter Camp's New Way To Keep Fit

Walter Camp, Yale's celebrated football coach, has been teaching men and women how to keep fit—on eggs—fall of bounding health and youthful vitality—and how to enjoy doing it. Walter Camp says that a civilized indoor man is a captive animal, just as much as a tiger in a cage. But the great instinctively knows how to take the kind of exercise he needs to keep fit—he stretches, turns and twists his "trunk muscles"—the very same muscles that tend to become weak and flabby in indoor men and women. With Mr. Camp's permission the "Daily Dozen" exercises have now been set to spirited music on phonograph records. They supply exactly the right movements to put these vitally important "trunk muscles" into the pink of condition, and keep them there. These 12 remarkable exercises, done to music, with a voice on the record calling out the commands, are all you need to keep your whole body in splendid condition—and they take only 10 minutes a day. You will also receive a set of handsome charts, with actual photographs showing exactly the move to make at each command. It is simple as A-B-C.

RECORD FREE

See for yourself what Walter Camp's "Daily Dozen" combined with the Health Builders System will do for you—without a dollar of expense. We will send you, entirely free, a sample photograph record carrying you to the attention of the camera, with a voice giving the directions and commands, and special photographs showing exactly the right movements to put these vitally important "trunk muscles" into the pink of condition, and keep them there. These 12 remarkable exercises, done to music, with a voice on the record calling out the commands, are all you need to keep your whole body in splendid condition—and they take only 10 minutes a day. You will also receive a set of handsome charts, with actual photographs showing exactly the move to make at each command. It is simple as A-B-C.

FREE SAMPLE RECORD AND CHART.
HEALTH BUILDERS, Dept. 905 Oyster Bay, N. Y.
Please send me your free sample "Health Builders" record, giving two of Walter Camp's famous "Daily Dozen" exercises, also a free chart containing actual photographs and simple directions for doing the exercises. I enclose a quarter (or 25 cents in stamps) for postage, packing, etc. This does not obligate me in any way whatever, and the sample record and chart are mine to keep.
Name _____ (Please Write Plainly)
Address _____