The MELODY GIRL

by RUTH DEWEY GROVES
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CHAPTER XXI

BERYL had not locked the bathroom door, an oversight that saved a deal of trouble. Irene was able to get in without waiting for someone to break down the door. She took one look at Beryl lying on the floor—a stain of red on her forehead where it had struck against the bathtub as she fell—and ran screaming to her mother's room.

Mrs. Everett was scarcely less panic-stricken than Irene when she saw Beryl, but between them they got the injured girl to her bed and then let Mr. Everett take charge. He ordered Irene to bathe the wound while he called a doctor. Then he had to give his attention to his wife who was "sure she was going to faint."

Beryl soon regained consciousness and saw in a moment into what confusion she had thrown the family. Therefore she said nothing about the pain in her head and waited quietly for the doctor.

When he came she confided to him that it was the pain in her throat that worried her. No, she hadn't fainted. She had slipped, a little dizzy, perhaps. Yes, she might have been feverish before she went to bed.

When the doctor left she realized that he hadn't given her any information at all. She was to remain in bed all day and he would come back on the morrow.

She obeyed these instructions until afternoon and then went to sit on the porch. The pain in her head was gone. She felt as well as usual except for a slight weakness and that queer feeling in her throat, a touch of which remained.

But her mother would take no chance so she said, and insisted upon helping her all the way to the porch. There Beryl remained quietly in a chair because she didn't want to disobey the doctor's orders altogether.

This was better than staying in bed, she argued with herself. Not half so tiring. If she were really to do as she liked she'd go down to the beach and sit on the sands in the sun and toast herself. Then the doctor would have something to scold her for, maybe.

She stirred uneasily in her chair. Could there be anything wrong with her—with her throat? The doctor had been so definite about coming back. Her throat! She hardly dared think what it would mean to her to have anything injure her throat—anything serious.

Well, their doctor was an old fogey. She'd have a consultation if he said there was anything wrong.

Beryl kept her concern to herself and got a bit of amusement out of Irene's enjoyment of the situation. Irene had assigned to herself the duty of answering the telephone calls. News of Beryl's fall had traveled quickly from neighbor to neighbor. Irene enjoyed the limelight. Her conversations were invariably sweet but short and Beryl guessed that she was waiting for one call in particular.

It came at last. Prentiss apologized for keeping them up so late the night before. He and Irene talked for several minutes before she remembered that it was Beryl he should be calling. Then Irene explained to him that Beryl was "indisposed," and could not come to the telephone. He asked if he might come out from town and without consulting Beryl, Irene told him that would be all right.

All day Mrs. Everett had been shooing visitors away from Beryl who found it strained her vocal cords to talk. Beryl reminded Irene of this when she heard Prentiss was coming.

"You shouldn't have let him," she said, "You know I can't talk."

A little later Tommy dropped in and wanted Irene to go for a swim with him. She said she had to shampoo her hair.

All three sat on the porch for a while. Beryl was silent and quivered inwardly over the adoration in Tommy's eyes whenever they rested on Irene. Irene chatted lightly of nothing, in high spirits but noticeably out of tune with Tommy. Tommy's mind there dawned a growing question.

Presently Irene left them—to make herself beautiful for Prentiss. Beryl well knew. She wondered if Irene realized that beauty is only the trap and that love to be held must be fed on something more substantial. Irene was fooling herself, too, for she was the type who would make herself charming only when she had a conquest in mind. Some day she would let herself go and very likely become frowzy. She was that type. She had appeared ungroomed at the breakfast table too often for Beryl to doubt it.

"Love to be held!" The phrase caught in Beryl's mind. Was she mistaken? Here was she, loving Tommy in spite of herself. What effort did he put forth to hold that love? None at all. Would there be some one to go on loving Irene knowing her shortcomings? She knew Tommy and she went on loving him, but Tommy was not like Irene. He was quite the reverse in fact. The more you studied Tommy the better you liked him. But if you scratched the surface of Irene's character—

Charitably Beryl turned her thoughts from that track. But what about Tommy if he married Irene and discovered that he had made a mistake?

Tommy seemed to think himself alone. He sat with his head in his hands and said nothing.

"I'm just an old shoe to him," Beryl thought bitterly (forgetting how dear are old shoes to weary feet). "But, oh Tommy, Tommy, how I could love you if you'd let me!"

The rush of desire, the thought, was so intense that for a few seconds Beryl was startled. She almost expected Tommy to look up as though she had spoken her thoughts aloud and he had heard.

How could she prevent Tommy from marrying Irene? Would she need to? There was Prentiss. But if nothing came of Prentiss' interest had one a right to interfere in another's life?

"Right or no right I'd stop this match if I could!" Beryl thought. It was all right to be high-minded, altruistic, and just, but Tommy was the man she loved. If only she knew how to save him!

"What a mother-in-law I'd make!" she jeered at herself. "I don't suppose I'd ever find a girl good enough for a son of mine. Who do I think I am anyway?"

At that point she decided to talk and stop thinking. What a dizzy, perplexing cycle life was. You whirled round and round and got nowhere.

When she wanted to talk Tommy decided to leave. Beryl saw she'd made a mistake. It had been so much more than she had as a rule—his sitting there alone with her. Why had she disturbed it? Next time she would know better.

She watched him go down the walk to the gate and her heart sagged with the sag in his shoulders. Tommy was troubled. How much did he know? Did he know that Irene was shampooing her hair to make a golden snare of it to catch another man's heart?

She closed her eyes suddenly against the sunlight and swallowed hard at the lump in her throat. But she would not start thinking again—she would not! There was so much to fear, so much to guess at.

So much to fear! Her emotion had tightened her throat. It pained her and all at once she felt very tired. No matter what came of it she would have to go to bed and leave the field to Irene when Prentiss arrived.

As Beryl climbed the stairs, a little uncertainly, she heard Irene humming in the bathroom. There was an exultant, even triumphant, note in the girl's voice. She was singing unconsciously and Beryl thought that if only her sister were content to sing without striving for operatic effects she might succeed professionally.

Professionally! She herself would sing professionally the next night. The pain in her throat—

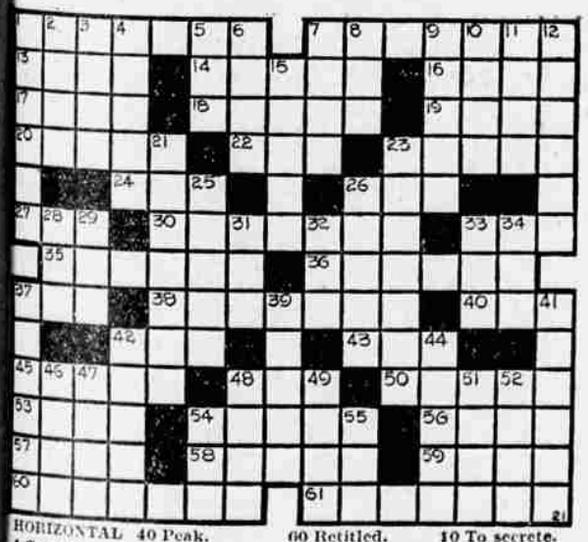
Beryl trembled as she got into bed. A little throat trouble . . . but what if she were going to be seriously ill.

As she lay there trying not to thing and failing in her effort Irene too was crossing bridges unbuilt. She was wondering how she could induce Tommy to postpone their marriage just a little longer than the date she had set without arousing his suspicions.

There was something on her mind, something she turned over and over in her thoughts as a miser turns his gold. It was something with glittering possibilities, but she was not sure of it. She would need time for that. Meanwhile . . .

(To Be Continued)

A Former President



HORIZONTAL
1 Canal between Lakes Erie and Ontario.
7 Official.
13 Toward sea.
14 Malicious burning of property.
16 Bee's home.
17 Grown coarse.
18 Helmsman.
19 Thought.
20 Less polite.
22 Skillet.
23 Gown.
24 Membranous bag.
26 Wager.
27 To scold constantly.
30 Passage through.
31 Insane.
35 Compound found in fruits.
36 Noticed.
37 To moisten.
38 Commanders.
40 Peak.
42 To scatter.
43 Pig pen.
45 Nocturnal animal.
48 Free fluid.
50 Chairs.
53 To lade water.
54 Assumed name.
56 On the lee.
57 Consumes.
58 To wash lightly.
59 To bellow.
60 Retitled.
61 Transformers.

VERTICAL
1 —— Harding?
2 Elder son of Isaac (Bib.).
3 To lend.
4 —— Michigan and Superior?
5 To doze.
6 To leak.
7 Lunar orb.
8 Social insect.
9 Blouse.
10 To secrete.
11 Birds.
12 Rented
15 Killed.
21 Snake.
23 Hates.
25 Sobbed.
26 Litters for the dead.
28 Monkey.
29 To secure.
31 Data.
32 Pronoun.
33 Encountered.
34 Stir.
37 Secretary of interior.
39 Sewer.
41 Puzzlers.
42 Oil city.
44 Twelve months (pl.).
46 Comfort.
47 Deportment.
48 Slipped.
49 Time gone by.
51 Herb.
52 Drop of eye fluid.
54 Verb.
55 To observe.

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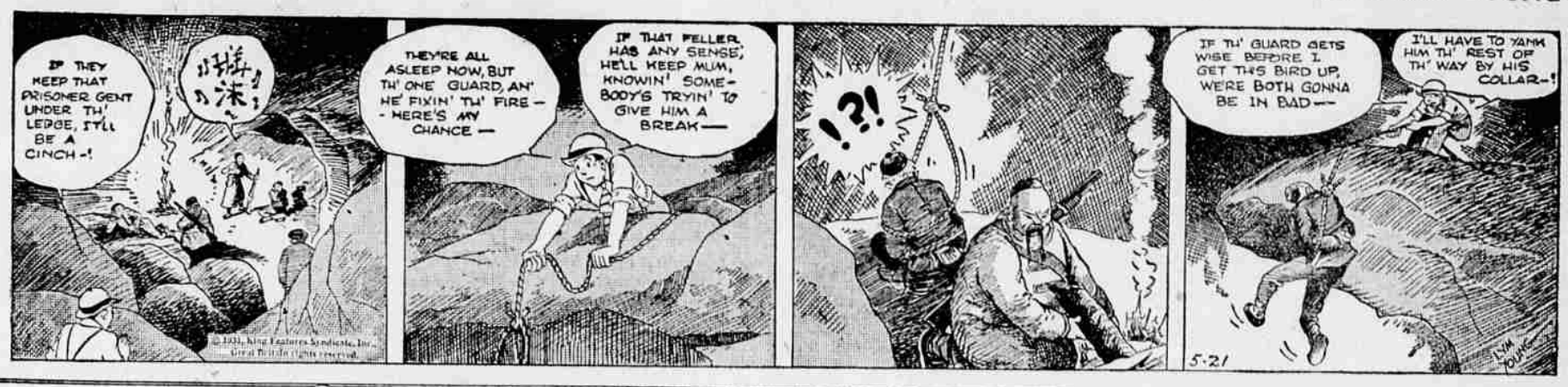
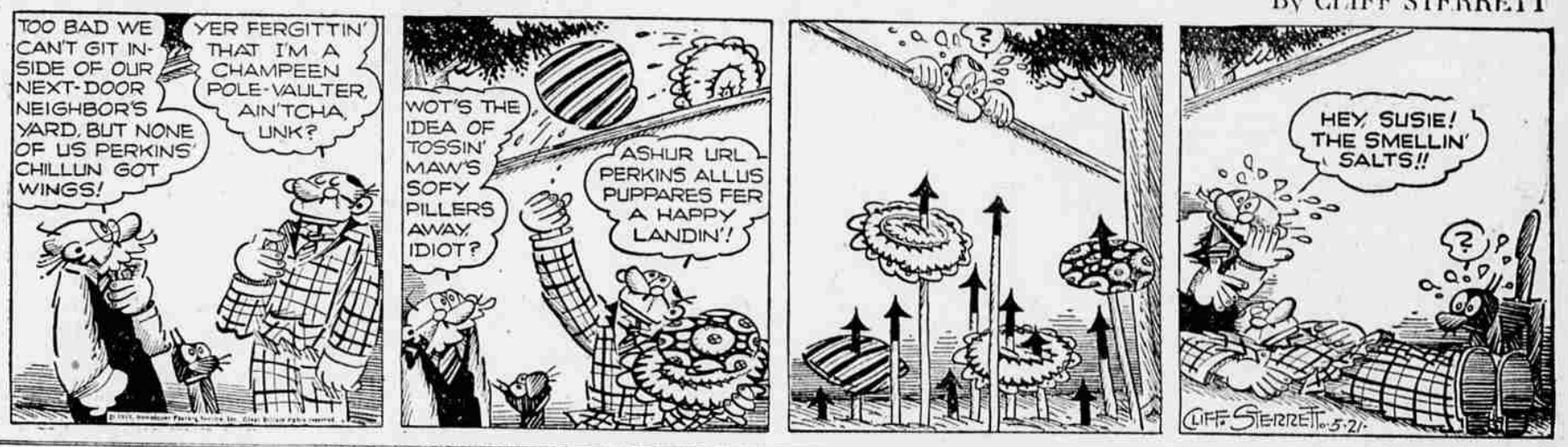


POLLY AND HER PALS

By CLIFF STERRETT



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Oh Dear!

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