Lovable

By Tracy Raymond © 1934 NEA Service Inc

CHAPTER XLVI

He heard the car on the drive just n, and a moment later the children ing through the house. There was knock on the door.

"Allan!"

"Come in."

Mrs. Tracy stood in the doorway, a ried look on her face. Sissy came, bing into his arms. "Ann's gone," y said.

Allan said nothing.

"Deliver me from temperamental ple, Allan!" Mrs. Tracy said petu- ly. "At least from all tempera- ntal people except myself."

"Great heavens. Can't you get to point?"

"Ann gave up her job this morning, asked me to drive her to town. spent all afternoon trying to get nebody else. Was it something did?"

"Of course not. I'm in love with , if that's what you mean."

"You're in love with Ann?"

"Why not?"

"I'm only surprised. You told ."

"About a week ago. I think I fell love with her the first time I saw ." He was sure he had. He had nted to touch Ann's hair, her lovely, r skin. He had thought her hands, arms and eyes were the most utiful he had ever seen.

"I'm afraid the artist fell in love," s. Tracy said slowly. "We artists e differently—and not constantly, an."

"If I had Ann I could get back my h in things."

"I'm afraid there's no hope."

"Go ahead."

"I think she's married."

"Married?"

"Yes. I went to her door one night opened it without knocking. She s sitting on the bed turning a little , a platinum wedding band, in her d. When she saw me she closed hand over it."

He gave a short, derisive laugh. arried! Not such an innocent as hough!"

After a moment he asked, "Where she now?"

"I left her at a place called the ns House—quite inexpensive. She d she would stay there until she ides what to do. Don't bother her ht now. She's terribly upset about nething."

"I have a little pride. She didn't n say goodby."

"She didn't want to go by your ice."

"Leave any message?"

"Just goodby."

He was furious. All the fun they d had together, the days of com- nionship had counted for nothing. t was the way with women. His e smouldered all evening.

He was sure Ann would not call sister. He suspected she was ered to get away.

• • •

But Ann did call. A month later s. Tracy reported to her brother, nn telephoned and I went to see . She has a job in a funny little okstore in a part of town you've obably never been in in your life. u have seen streets like it, though. ere most of the goods is displayed the outside. Think of Ann work- in a dingy shop. Right next door re are trousers, shirts and what hanging from the awning. And ross the street an Italian vegetable d fruit stand. I can't see what- r possessed her."

"It probably was all she could get ht now. Jobs aren't picked up ry day."

"But she had a good place here. d to leave it to go to a bookstore!"

"Evidently she didn't like us," Allan d darkly. "Could you blame her?"

Mrs. Tracy thought her brother was king thinner. He missed Ann. She , too, for that matter, and the dren for a few days could not be nforted. Even now they were lead- Miss Spencer a dance, forever king of their beloved "Ann."

"Where's this bookstore?"

Mrs. Tracy told him.

"I might decide to buy a book some . Not for a long time. Not ever I can stay away."

Ann said there are some rare old ks there. She was quite enthusias- when I saw her. She was painting ndow signs. Said she had per- suaded the owner it would be good business to advertise. He's a broken-down professor, I gathered, and he and his wife live in the rear of the store."

"Where does Ann live?"

"She and a girl she met somewhere—a girl who works in a department store—have a small apartment together. Ann didn't say where."

"What a life!"

"That's what I tried to tell her. She said she wasn't worried about the future. If she could only get over the present she would be all right."

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Getting over the present was proving fearfully hard for Ann. It meant a continual battle with her thoughts, concentrating on her duties.

"Another day," she thought each morning, as the dread procession of days went by. Another . . . another.

And then it was fall and she was hurrying into the shop out of the raw, wind-swept streets, warming her hands at the big stove in the back of the shop.

Professor Barber—he still used the title he had acquired in happier days—was pleased over Ann's interest in her work and gratified over results. The shelves had never before been so clean. The books had never before been so neatly and attractively arranged. Fiction, non-fiction, the new and the old. Early editions for those who were searching for the rare and unusual. All in their respective places. All carefully catalogued by Ann.

Business was picking up, too.

"It was a good day for us when she came here, eh, mother?" the old man said to his wife one night. "The customers like her fine."

"So pretty and kind," Mrs. Barber said. "So interested in helping people find what they want, Father. The young men all come back to buy more books. Maybe if business keeps up, we can give her a raise by Christmas. What do you say, Father?"

"Maybe by the first of the year," the old German said cautiously.

Ann's salary was only $18 a week. By practicing rigid economy she was able to live within it. From the $40 a week she had earned as governess to the Tracy children she had a small nest egg saved—close to $150. She was holding this intact. Her emergency fund, she called it. She might get sick, might lose her job. Anything might happen. She was trying to keep her courage. But it was hard, struggling for a place in the crowded street car. Sometimes giving up a coveted seat to someone who looked more weary and tired and worn than she. Standing in line at the cafeteria each day at noon and going home after a hard day to help Sheila Davis prepare supper.

A year ago at this time she was planning to marry Tony. It seemed forever since those carefree days.

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DURING the long, lonely weeks Ann was tempted more than once to call Sarah. She had wanted to slip into the church to see Sarah and Mac married, but had been afraid to risk it. No, she must not see Sarah. Not until after Peter's marriage. Then perhaps she could go back and pick up the threads of the old life again and weave for herself a pattern of security and peace. If she communicated with Sarah there would be only one result. Sarah would see Peter and he would come forward with a generous offer to secure Ann's future.

Anything, anything would be preferable to that!

"A young man came in to buy a book from you," Professor Barber told Ann one day when she returned from lunch. He was smiling broadly.

'A young man?" Ann questioned, trying not to let excitement show in her voice. Her heart began to beat furiously. Was he tall?"

"Yes. A tall young man." Professor Barber's faded blue eyes, under bushy brows, beamed at her. "So anxious he was, too."

Peter—but it might not be Peter!

"Was his hair light or dark?" Ann was very busy all at once, putting her books back in their places.

"How should I know? With the shop so dark and my eyes not so good as they once were. But a very handsome young man, I could see."

(To Be Continued)

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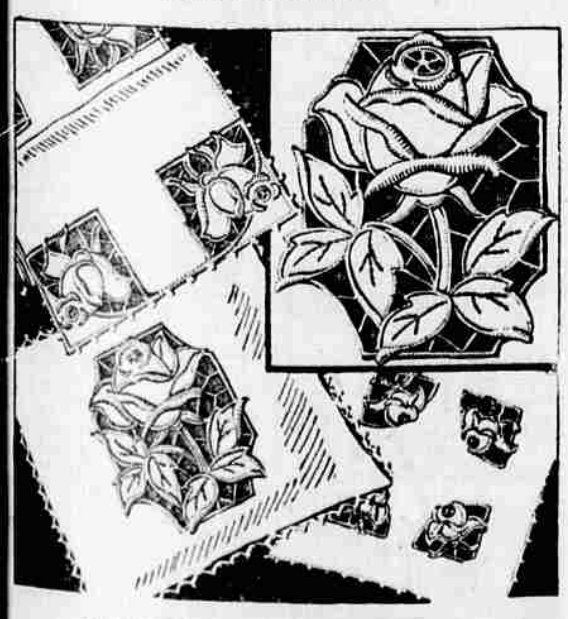

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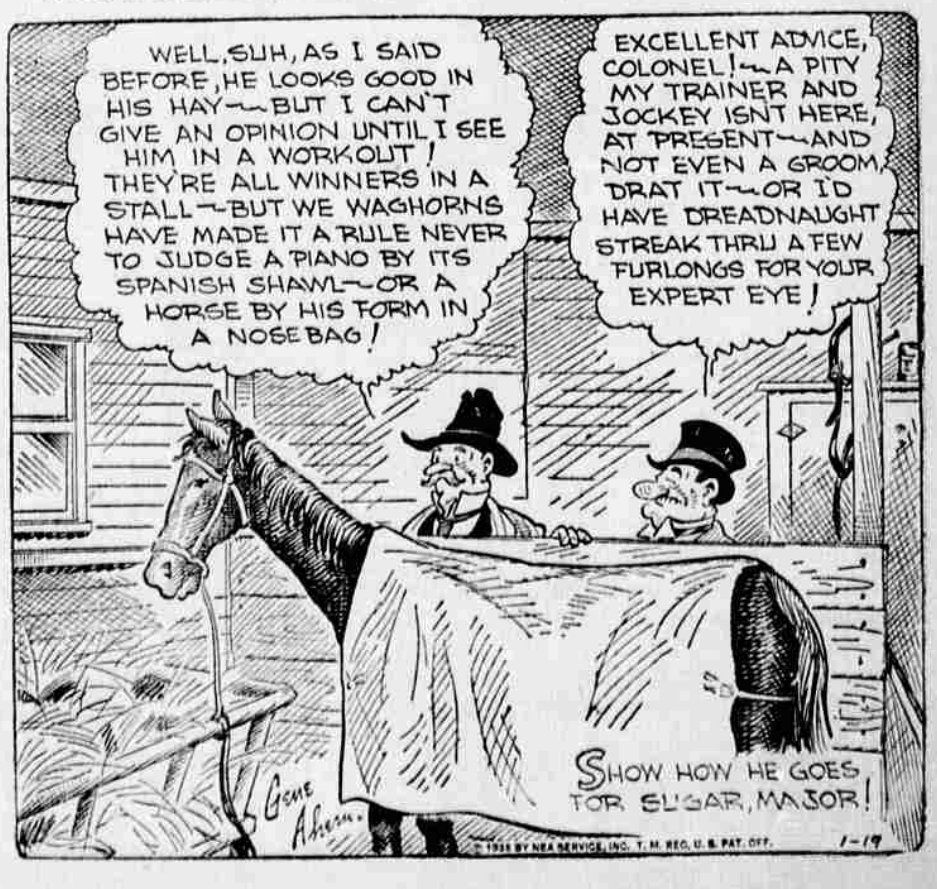
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