

LOVE TALES TERSELY TOLD

Two Sisters and Pauline

By Abner Anthony

MR. BRADISH was spending the evening with the Misses Watson, and they had asked in little Pauline Porter to take the fourth hand at pinochle. They sat about the green felt-covered card table with three electric light bulbs shining down upon them with full force. The Misses Watson's eyes, even though assisted by glasses, required plenty of light.

Anna was the elder Miss Watson, although there was little difference in their ages. She was rather gray and sallow, but she had vivacity and wit, and her fame as a cook was noised abroad in the land. Miss Anna had had her chances to wed but being particular she had waited too long. It was a case of the man who went to the forest to cut a cane; he was not easily suited, and the first thing he knew he had passed clear through the woods to the other side, so it was which was necessary to take the last stick, which was a crooked one, or none at all. Mr. Bradish was in no way a "crooked stick," but it is true that twenty years

before Anna Watson would not have looked at him. Her rival was her sister, Angelica. Angelica was dark, slim, faded, and prided herself on being of the literati. She wrote pretty verses that were sometimes printed, and she played the piano charmingly. Angelica had had two or three romances, which had come to naught, but she was not so sentimental as one might suppose. She had, however, made up her mind to marry Mr. Bradish if he asked her. She talked it over very calmly with Anna. It was a question which of them would win.

So far Mr. Bradish had been very impartial. It was evident that he liked both sisters. It was clearly a case of "how happy I could be with either" but "tother dear charmer" was never away. The sisters were inseparable. Mr. Bradish could never see one without also seeing the other.

Mr. Bradish was large, bald, rosy, and good-humored. He was a widower, and lived across the street with an ancient housekeeper. He loved to play cards, and when the sisters invited him over he came readily. Sometimes, as on this evening, he came without being asked. Then they had to scurry around to find the fourth player. Usually they asked in Pauline Porter.

Pauline Porter had a room in an adjoining house. She was something of a relation—a fourth cousin, or the like—and being well-to-do, they felt called upon to do something for her. She was thirty-five, rather an ordinary little person, quiet and gentle. She was a typist, and earned enough for her slim meals and her unfashionable clothing. She had never had a lover in her life, or known any man.

After the second game Miss Anna called a halt. Always there were refreshments at these impromptu card parties, and while Anna was collecting them Angelica played the piano. While Anna exercised the belief that the true way to a man's heart is

through his stomach, Angelica's appeal was purely spiritual. Mr. Bradish loved music, and was charmed by her. She played all her sweetest and softest melodies, but in the midst of Siegmund's love song Anna entered the room bearing a tray laden with some of her famous sugared doughnuts and a jug of grape juice. Mr. Bradish's attention instantly wandered from the music and concentrated upon the delicious looking doughnuts. As for poor little-half-dressed Pauline, she had no idea of music, anyway, but she could understand the satisfying possibilities that lay in real food.

"Come, Angelica, you've played long enough," commanded Anna. And Angelica resumed her place at the table, feeling that she had lost in her sister's favor. The feeling grew as Mr. Bradish ate and praised, but when the last cake had been consumed he leaned back in his chair and asked Angelica to please play that last air over again. With a triumphant glance at her sis-

ter, Angelica fled to the piano and Anna was left to bear away the empty tray in great chagrin. Pauline sat like a little shadow on the edge of the big walnut chair.

At 10 o'clock Pauline murmured that she must go, urging as a timid excuse that she had to rise at 6 in order to be ready for her work at 8. Mr. Bradish also rose and offered to see her home. It was very kind in Mr. Bradish, the sisters thought, seeing in it a compliment to themselves. So they kissed Pauline good night and put her in the gentleman's care. Then they turned out the light and ran to the window to see the pair go down the street in the ample winter moonlight.

"What a nice Pauline is!" Anna remarked. "She scarcely reaches to his shoulder. And what possessed her to wear that frumpy old black dress! She's got a better one." "Pauline's queer," sighed Angelica. "Living alone makes her so, I suppose. I never saw her act queerer than she did tonight. Mr. Bradish

must have noticed the contrast." They had rather a sleepless night, each in her own room, and in consequence they met at the breakfast table in a state of armed neutrality. Angelica was languid but polite, Anna brittle but silent.

Into this rarefied atmosphere entered little Pauline even rosier and brighter eyed than she had been the evening before.

"Why are you not at work?" demanded Anna. "You aren't ill? Sit down and have a cup of coffee and some toast."

"Oh, thank you, I can't eat. I'm too happy to eat," Pauline panted. "Oh, girls, it doesn't seem possible—I can't realize it yet—it was so unexpected—oh, girls!" "What are you talking about?" asked Anna. "Don't go on so. Tell us what you have to say," said Angelica.

Pauline looked from one face to the other. "I'm going to marry Mr. Bradish," she burst out.

"How do you know?" demanded Anna, training her last gun of defense. "Because he's asked me," answered Pauline, simply. "He asked me last night. And—and he's going to bring me a beautiful diamond ring this evening. And we're going to be married just as quick as he can dispose of his housekeeper—and I've given up my job to get ready—oh, girls! Will you help me pick out my wedding clothes?" Anna looked at Angelica and Angelica looked back at Anna.

It was Anna who spoke. After all, it was just as well. And she preferred that Pauline should have him rather than Angelica. Any kind of a husband would be a godsend to Pauline, poor thing. "Of course, we'll help you pick out your things," she said bravely. "And, what is more, Pauline—after all, we are related and you're no body else—we'll see that you are married properly. Won't we, Angelica?" "Certainly, dear," responded Angelica faintly, but generously, as always following her sister's lead.

Making Good His Bluff

By Joella Johnson

JOHN MARSHALL MCKENZIE took the three front door steps to his boarding house with one bound. But when he entered the dingy little hall where commingled odors of cabbage and soup greeted his nostrils, his footsteps became languid and he mounted to his hall bedroom on the third floor under an unusually heavy depression.

It was the third time this week he had entered with the same feeling. It was discouraging, to say the least, but more so because he reckoned it was no fault of his own; yes, he found himself suddenly thrown out of employment, a week behind in his room rent—and no prospects of a job in sight.

One of the principles of business his successful father before him had always impressed on his mind came to him now with mocking force.

"Never allow the next fellow to know you're down and out. To him who hath shall be given," he would say nodding his wise old head.

Up to this fall John had thought he was a pretty wise old Dad. Even though he had left all his money to an untutored-of-the-ways-of-business widow. But now misgivings were beginning to pour in upon him. He had visited the offices of his many business acquaintances who had still kept going regardless of the war, and the answer to his applications for a place seemed to be unanimous. "Not just now, old man," they told him, "but drop around in a month or so and perhaps we can use you."

"By Jove," he exclaimed as his face lighted up, "an invitation to Marion Collins' coming-out party." But his enthusiasm waned almost immediately and he sat down on the side of his bed with a dejected thud. He read aloud the engraved invitation forwarded here from his recent and more prosperous looking address again and again in a drab, monotonous voice.

His mind traveled quickly over his wardrobe. No evening clothes. He

had pawned them only two weeks before to pay Bill Matthews' note of the lunch money he had borrowed. Then he thought of his cash on hand. It was with a depressed feeling, he opened the dresser drawer and counted out four lonely silver dollars. That surely would never buy a full dress suit. It would just about take him there and back in a taxi.

"I'll go," he cried suddenly. "I'll go, by George, I'll never let anything like that stand in my way. Why, if old Dick Collins ever knew I was down and out he'd despise me for father's sake. I'll risk it," he declared, and folding his gold watch and chain into his little chaotic case, he grabbed up his hat and rushed below to the pawn shop two squares down.

One week later the same John dressed immaculately in the best dress suit he could hire at the established tailor, Marx and Connoley, sauntered into the reception room at the sight of Mrs. Collins, Marion's mother.

He met most of the guests, but his eyes searched eagerly for the coveted one.

"Hello, Johnny McKenzie," he heard a voice behind him say, and he turned to encounter Marion, her face aglow, her slim little figure gowned in a soft, filmy white creation that became her wonderfully John thought.

"Why, Marion," he said ecstatically, "congratulations, you big, grown up lady! You're looking wonderful, Marlon, and I'm sure glad to see you. After the first dance, they sauntered out on the big rose-ined veranda and he made room for himself next to her on the rustic bench.

"Johnny," she said, with old-time familiarity, "why have you stayed away from us all so long, you poor-over-worked boy!"

"That's just it," he lied. "so much work. I didn't dare stop for a minute. You know how this war stuff is booming."

And she did. Her father's own million plant had tripled in size since the declaration of war, and was growing larger every day.

Suddenly John leaned over and drew her soft little hands within his own.

"Marion, dear," he began tenderly, but he stopped abruptly as he thought of the true state of his finances. He could not propose; but "Gad," he muttered to himself, how he wanted to.

He looked up and Marion's eyes were shining like twin soft winter stars. He read the answer he longed to ask—but he dared not speak.

"Come," he said suddenly, "let us go indoors again." "There—" he pointed through the lace-clad window screen, "there's Bob Davis looking his eyes out for that promised dance with you. She rose indignantly.

"Oh, Mack!" called Mr. Collins, the millionaire munition manufacturer, as John McKenzie turned in the hallway toward the smoking-room.

"At your service, sir," McKenzie returned lightly, and they strode together toward the little alcove.

"I know it's a shame to break in on your fun, old man, but would you mind stepping to my room a moment. I've something I'd like to talk over with you."

A myriad of accusations raced through John McKenzie's head, but he smiled diplomatically and accepted with grace.

"It's just this, in a nutshell," Richard Penmore Collins said almost immediately when he had drawn up his chair to the desk piled high with papers, "you're a pretty snappy sort of chap. Mack, and fact is, I want you in my business. I know," he hurried on to say, "it's asking a lot to give up that stock business you're in, but—just look here, my boy, and be reached for some data and began to go over the net profit receipts of his factory.

"Now then—" he concluded in his customary phrasing, "how would five thousand a year strike you for a beginner?"

John McKenzie fingered the lapels of his coat a bit spasmodically for a second. The shock was almost too much. But he summoned his courage, braced his shoulders, and with a little throw of his head replied: "It's a go, Mr. Collins, but on one condition—I must have Marion as my wife."

"Why—why—" Mr. Collins was shocked into frowning for a moment, but suddenly broke into a hearty laugh. "Why, old man," he said with a slap on the younger's shoulder, "if the little lady is willing, it suits me to a T. Then," he continued, "if it's going to be a family affair, we might consider giving you a share in the business, just for luck."

"Just as dear old Dad always told me," John repeated joyfully as he held Marion in his arms a few moments later, "never admit you're beaten, and the best will come to you, for its a case of: 'To him who hath shall be given.' And Marion thought so, too.

The Man From The West

By Phil Moore

ALTHOUGH her heart was very sad, the Widow Merrill that morning dressed herself in her shabby best and went from house to house among her neighbors, informing them of the auction of her effects that day and of her own impending departure the next.

"It's almost like asking them for charity," she mourned in her sensitive heart, "letting them know I'm selling my things this way, so's they'll all be there. Still everything'll go cheap and they'll be saying on what-ever they buy," she added, conscientiously, "and of course nobody has to buy that don't want to."

Nevertheless, it was hard; and hard as still to answer her neighbors' curious questions for lying was not easy for the honest little soul, and for once she felt that she could not tell the truth.

"Well, well! So you're a-learnin' us, And where may you be goin'?" asked

old Grandma Beagle, who lived down by the river road and whose son owned Mayburt's laundry and was well to do. Grandma Beagle's eyes were sharp and black and when she asked a question they fixed themselves upon you in a way that dared you to tell her an untruth.

"I'm going to my brother in the West," answered the Widow Merrill, and her voice faltered as she told the pitiful little lie. "My brother is—is rich," she continued, "and last week I got a letter from him saying he wants to give me a home and make me happy the rest of my life. My brother always thought a heap o' me," the Widow Merrill ended lamely.

"Humph! He's taken his time about showin' it," remarked Grandma Beagle. "Well, better late than never, I s'pose. But it seems to me like, sassin' you're goin' to be rich an' prosperous for the rest of your life, you might give away your belongings to your old

neighbors instead o' askin' us to buy 'em."

The Widow Merrill's face flushed a dull, miserable red and a sick look came into her old eyes. "Seems like I'd ought to pay my own fare out there, when he's a-goin' to do so much for me." She tried to make her voice steady, but it would tremble. "Seems like I might at least do that much. Well, g'day, Mis' Beagle." And she was off for the next house. "I wonder if she believed me?" the old woman questioned herself as she went. "I wonder if she does think I'm goin' to a rich brother, instead of jest to the—the-poor farm?"

Everywhere it was the same. They all questioned and commented, some kindly, others in a spirit of jest at the old woman's pitiful attempt at deception. Not one of them believed the story of the rich brother.

House by house she made the rounds; then hurried back to take a

last farewell of her dear belongings before they should be gone forever from her. They were not many. Everything but these few dearest possessions had gone before now, sold in the city to buy food and fuel during the long winter months. And now these, too, must go to pay her overdue rent. At least she should owe nothing when she made the long dreaded journey to the poor farm. The auction would surely bring enough for the rent.

One by one the old woman fondled the articles collected in the front room, waiting to be sold. This old armchair had been her husband's, and for over thirty years he had taken his rest within its capacious shelter; and this teapot had belonged to her mother—dear old friend, with its old-fashioned curved spout and handle; how many cups of tea had she poured from it in all the years since it had been given her on her wedding day? From these very dishes she and Will

had eaten their first breakfast together. And this silver cake basket he had given her upon their first anniversary. She laid her hand caressingly upon each old article, so rich in memories to her. Then, over in the corner farthest from the door, as though they were placed there to shield it from curious eyes as long as possible, the old woman knelt beside the dearest possession of all. It was a little cradle, old-fashioned in design, intricately carved, kept dusted and shining throughout the years by loving hands. Will himself had carved it—it was 40 long years ago. Their baby had lived only a little time, but the few short weeks it had—lain in the cradle had made it a hallowed shrine. Always she had knelt beside it to whisper her prayers. She had thought never to part with her baby's cradle, but now—

"Mis' Stevens, on the hill, will buy you, I know," she murmured to it. "She's a nice lady and kind; I'd rather it'd be her than any one."

There was a step upon the porch and the Widow Merrill rose hastily to her feet. "The auctioneer?" she thought, and, choking back a sob, stepped to the door.

But it was not wizened old Jim Wray, who officiated at all Mayburt's auctions. This was an elderly, well-dressed stranger, who doffed his hat and bowed with an old-time courtesy as the Widow Merrill opened the door.

"I wonder if you would be so kind as to direct me—Mary!" cried the stranger suddenly, in a joyful voice, and the Widow Merrill realized that she was in the arms of her brother, of whom she had heard nothing in twenty-five years. "I stopped writing because I was ashamed to write again," he was explaining. "I'd borrowed so much from you and Will and it seemed I would never be able to repay you. For years I knocked about the

country, doing odd jobs here and there, never getting ahead. Then suddenly—I don't know why—I came to a realization of how I was wasting my life, drifting. I settled down to a steady position, worked hard, invested my savings. I never expected to become rich from my small investment, but war orders made the stock rise with a jump and keep rising. Last week I sold out and—well, none of us need ever worry about rent and groceries now. You and Will and I—"

"Not—Will," whispered the Widow Merrill, and they held hands in silence for a while.

A knock at the door, and there stood the auctioneer and the neighbors. Some came in a spirit of friendliness, some out of curiosity; but they were all there.

As they fled away Grandma Beagle was heard to say, in a tone of great respect, "her brother's awful rich, an' he always thought a heap o' her."

A Desperate Scheme

By Elsie Endicott

THE news flashed around the crowded ballroom at the alarming rate of speed with which sensational gossip usually travels. Tom Haldon, the much courted, spoiled bachelor of the town, was engaged to Mary McManners. Everybody thought that Mary would marry Dick Tyler, who presented the extraordinary spectacle of a rich man's son working as hard as if he did not expect to inherit a dollar. To see him, clad in rough clothes, rushing here and there in his father's big munition factory, one would never dream that he was sole heir to several million. Mary McManners was the only girl he had ever noticed, and it was a foregone conclusion in the little town that she was far too clever a girl to allow

such a good chance to slip through her slender fingers.

"Here comes Dick Tyler now! I wonder how he took the news or do you suppose he knows?" she whispered him, her hand out in friendly disguise. She had the curiosity of the majority of people to find out how Dick was going to take the news.

"How are you, Dick?" she asked pleasantly. "You're late, as usual, due to overwork. I declare, you are a marvel to me, working as hard as if you did not have a cent."

Dick Tyler laughed, his eyes eagerly searching the crowd as if in quest of one face. "I'm doing my bit, that's all. It's a matter of patriotism; I can serve Uncle Sam better in the factory than in the ranks of the army

or navy. I'm trained for that, you know, while in the field I would be merely a raw recruit."

"That's so. By the way, Dick," said the old lady, unable to restrain her curiosity any longer. "what do you mean by letting Tom Haldon carry Mary McManners off right before your eyes? You are the better man."

"I don't believe I quite understand—" began Dick haltingly. "Well, Mary has announced her engagement to Tom. You knew that, didn't you?"

There was a curious tightening around Dick's wide mouth. "No," he said quietly. "I hadn't heard the news."

"Why, why," began old Mrs. Patterson, a bit, frustrated to hear that he

was entirely ignorant of the latest gossip. "I think that she could have told you before she made it public. The little cat! Well, all I can say is that she'll rue the day she marries Tom. A man with his roving habits will never settle down. Mark my words!"

Dick answered her perfunctorily and strode away. Mrs. Patterson watched him, her faded blue eyes a bit misty. She had a little feeling of misgiving because she had told him about the engagement. After all, it was none of her business, and she had always liked the boy. "There is one thing certain," she said, turning to her interested neighbor, "I won't send her any wedding present that costs over \$5. That will worry her some, I guess.

For I promised her a silver tea service like I gave Katie Carr, you remember."

"Any dances left for me, Mary?" asked Dick, stopping before a radiant young girl in filmy rose-colored tulle. "I always save some for you, Dick, because you are sure to be late everywhere. You think more of your work than you do of the girls, don't you?" she questioned, smilingly.

"No, Mary; you know better than that," he said, quietly, and there was a sadness in his eyes that seemed to take away part of the girl's eager joy. "I have just heard of your engagement. I want to offer my good wishes. Your happiness means more to me than anything else in the world."

asked Mary, tremulously, as they turned toward a little alcove where there was a bench behind tall palms and ferns.

"Have you seen Tom Haldon anywhere?" Mary demanded of Mrs. Patterson half an hour later. "I must see him right away."

"You win, Tom, you old dear!" Mary was laughing hysterically while Tom Haldon was trying to get her away from people so that nobody would hear. "I—I never can do enough for you. You blessed old thing, and just at times I have said that you were not worth a thing to the world. Why, you've made me happier than I ever was in all my life."

"What did Dick Tyler say? That's what I want to know."

"Oh, I can't tell that to anybody, not even to you. He wants me to marry him right away, within six weeks. But, Tom, don't you think I ought to tell him that we had up a wager on what we would do when our engagement was announced and that it was just a scheme to make him acknowledge his love for me?"

"For heaven's sake, no! That would spoil the whole thing," said Tom.

Tom Haldon threw a cigarette, as yet unlighted, into an ash tray. "Wouldn't I have been in the denude of a fix if Dick hadn't taken her off my hands? By George, that was a close shave."

"Suppose the scheme had failed and I had been compelled to marry him!" Mary soliloquized, secretly.