

## Elsie Takes Command

By WILL T. AMES

A ferry boat load of the shipyard men piled pell-mell over the wharf, across the railroad tracks and onto the main thoroughfare of the town, at the foot of which lay the makeshift slip. They were roughly clad and grimy and strong, and many of them, hard-looking.

There had been a crap game on the boat coming over and it had not gone smoothly. Three of the men among the thousand showed the marks of it, for they were more or less bloody and still white with anger.

The three, each with a friend or two, stopped at the saloon at the foot of the street to wash off the stains of the row. The rest of the workers paid no heed but hurried on homeward. There was little laughter or joking. What conversation there was among them was unsmiling and it was plain to be seen that the yeast of discontent was at work.

At the street corner two blocks from the wharf a girl stood by the curb, watching the passing throng and looking for some one. By and by she caught sight of a tall, toughly fashioned young fellow with thick hair that looked flaxen by contrast with his sun-burned skin.

He spied the girl at the same instant, said a brief word to the companions of the moment, and stopped beside her, automatically reaching out for the bundles she carried.

The girl's eyes were shining. "What do you know, Billy? I found a place! An honest-to-goodness apartment. Mrs. Ellis heard about a couple that are going out of town—somebody she knows. She's a good old thing, after all, Billy, and she went right down there and got them to keep still about it till we could get a chance at the place."

"I've been down today and engaged it. It's an old house, Billy, but there's three rooms and a bath—and only one other family, the folks that own it; they live downstairs. I guess they're hoisting the rent two or three dollars. But we should worry—with your pay. It's our lucky day, isn't it, Billy?"

But Billy Noxon didn't respond to the happy mood of his young wife nearly as she had anticipated. While Elsie lay in wait for him there she had expected that he would throw up his hat and shout. Places to live—to really live and keep house like regular civilized people—were simply unobtainable in the town. The Noxons had been "light housekeeping" in a single room for four months, like hundreds of others.

"Don't know as there's any use in fussing about it, Chick," the boy finally replied soberly. "We're likely to have to get to blazes out of this man's town any time now. The gang's pretty sore, and they're likely to tie a can, any time at all, to the bunch of grafters that are running the tea kettle factory over the river."

"What do you mean, Billy Noxon—a strike?"

"It's a heap sight more than just one strike, when the blowoff comes. The working man has been carrying the tar end of the stick about as long as he's going to in this country. Here's you and me living like a couple of bums in a coop of a rook and me sweating my hide off over there on those hulls—and a lot of loafers that don't hit a ship a lick from the time she's doped out till she's overboard, and haven't even got a dollar of their own money in the plant, pulling down millions."

"Living in palaces and dressing their wives in thousand-dollar furs and swelling around in limousines and playing golf while we play on a rivet gun—and all off us! All stolen from the working man and his family! And then, when we hit them for a lousy dollar a day raise, to help pay for the profiteering prices on the grub we eat, they give us the hoot!"

Elsie was looking very steadily and studiously at her big husband. "Well," she said, as he ran out of breath.

"Well," Billy resumed, "it's about all over, sis. There's going to be something doing, and that right quick. I dunno's it's worth while for us to change from one room to three. Maybe we'll be in the middle of a hard-boiled ship in a week or two—and either have some kind of a decent share in things or nothing at all. Death's better than slavery." The boy stared gloomily at a passing touring car.

The girl was about an inch above five feet—her husband about an inch above six. Her eyes had been growing bigger and bigger as she listened to his dour speech. Now she seized him by the arm and said: "Billy Noxon, you come home with me, straight."

"And don't you speak—or even think—a word till I tell you to." The somber face of the boy thawed "to a sheepish grin as he permitted himself to be marshaled along six city blocks to the place where they lived in Mrs. Ellis' furnished second floor back."

Not until they were in their room, with the door closed behind them did Elsie speak again. "Now," she declared taking the bundles from Billy and putting them on the table, "I've got something to say to you, you 'big boob! You've been listening to those darned bolsheviks again! You sit down there and answer me a couple of questions," and she pushed her husband into the limpy-legged Morris chair.

"First—How much money did we have after two years when you quit Roxbury and came here? We had \$140, didn't we? We've been here four months, and how much have we got? We've got \$480 of new money, that's what we've got. And it's clean money, Billy, honestly earned. I'd rather have that than a million that was grafted. We're not getting along so badly. Maybe somebody else is getting a whole lot more that doesn't deserve it half as much. But I guess these things will be straightened out if fellows like you don't go looney and spoil everything. Anyhow, you never had so much money ahead in your life. Billy Noxon, and I know it."

"Now, who's the head devil over there at the yard in getting up all this I. W. sentiment? Is it a black-muzzled fellow they call Saunderson?"

"Well, Saunderson's the smartest, most independent man in the yard, if

that's what you mean, and not afraid to speak his mind. The fellows listen to him because he's there with the goods."

"I thought so. I sat behind him and some other anarchists in a street car yesterday, when he ought to have been at work, and I know what he thinks. I heard him tell the man with him that it was about time the 'boorzhs' was kept from monopolizing everything, including the 'most beautiful and desirable wives'—that's exactly what he said, Billy Noxon!"

"Well," responded Billy, rather doubtfully, "he meant that a working man can't compete with a rich one for a girl, when he can't send her flowers and give her buzz-car rides and such things."

"Billy, you're a simp. He meant—because he said so—that the women ought to be nationalized. Understand that? Made the property of the men equally, like the food and the clothes and the houses and automobiles! He said it was too early to spring that idea yet, but it would surely come."

Billy tried to say something, but the little wife kept on. "Billy, I didn't tell you before, but twice that black devil has tried to pick me up on the street. Yesterday when he got up to leave the car he grinned at me and winked, and he said out of the corner of his mouth as he passed: 'Pretty peach! Billy Noxon, do you want me nationalized—for Saunderson? Are you for the bolsheviks or for me?'"

Billy Noxon found Saunderson in the yard next day, and hammered him for five minutes. He told him that he'd lick him every time he saw him. Wherefore, Saunderson is now agitating elsewhere, and there hasn't been any strike in the yard. Maybe everything is not exactly as it should be as between labor and capital, but as between Billy and Elsie, bolshevism hasn't a look-in.

### Quest of Novelty.

"Henry, I must have a motorcar that is unlike anybody else's."

"I don't see how we are going to arrange that, my dear. Most of the available models seem to be in use. However, we might persuade a manufacturer to build a car to order shaped like a bee hive, and you should buzz around in that."—Birmingham Age Herald.

Governor Olcott sent a telegram to Admiral Rodman, in command of the Pacific fleet at Santa Barbara, Cal., requesting that he make every effort to send as many ships of the fleet as possible to Portland after the presidential review without the ships first going to Bremerton.

Rapidly growing interest in the American Legion throughout the state is reported by Ozbun Walker, advance agent for E. J. Eivers, state chairman of the legion, who has been touring eastern and central Oregon in the interest of the national organization of former service men.

J. W. Burgess of Pendleton will succeed W. L. Thompson as the eastern Oregon member of the state highway commission when Thompson leaves the board upon his removal from Pendleton to Portland, January 1, according to an announcement, made officially by Governor Olcott.

A total of 25 private educational institutions in Oregon have sent to Sam Kozor, assistant secretary of state, evidence of their being institutions of earning under the provisions of the soldiers', sailors' and marines' educational financial aid law passed at the last session of the legislature.

Word has been received in Pendleton from the national wool growers' association advising stockmen to refrain from purchasing stockseed cake at the present price of \$50 a ton. Present price of stockseed cake is laid out "unholy speculation." A price of \$60 later in the season is expected.

That D. C. Bricheux and E. B. Southwick, who escaped last week from the state hospital flax-pulling gang, were aided by Southwick's brother instead of his sister, Miss Florence Southwick, is now the opinion of Superintendent Griffith. The men, after leaping from the hospital ruck, are believed to have escaped in an automobile.

Harry G. Allen, grand exalted ruler of Portland lodge No. 142, was made president of the Oregon State Elks' association by unanimous vote at the business session of the convention in Klamath Falls. Salem was the unanimous choice for the 1920 convention city and Marshfield was given a standing complimentary vote as the choice for the 1921 convention session.

Mrs. L. M. Bentley, president of the Oregon woman's relief corps organizations, whose members expect to attend the national convention, which will be held simultaneously with the national encampment of the grand army at Columbus, O., on the week beginning September 7, to proceed without delay to secure identification certificates from post commanders of the grand army.

There will be no special session of the Oregon legislature to ratify the woman's suffrage amendment unless the situation becomes such that the fate of the movement depends upon the vote of Oregon and a majority of the legislators pledge themselves to refrain from considering legislation other than the amendment at issue, according to an announcement by Governor Olcott.

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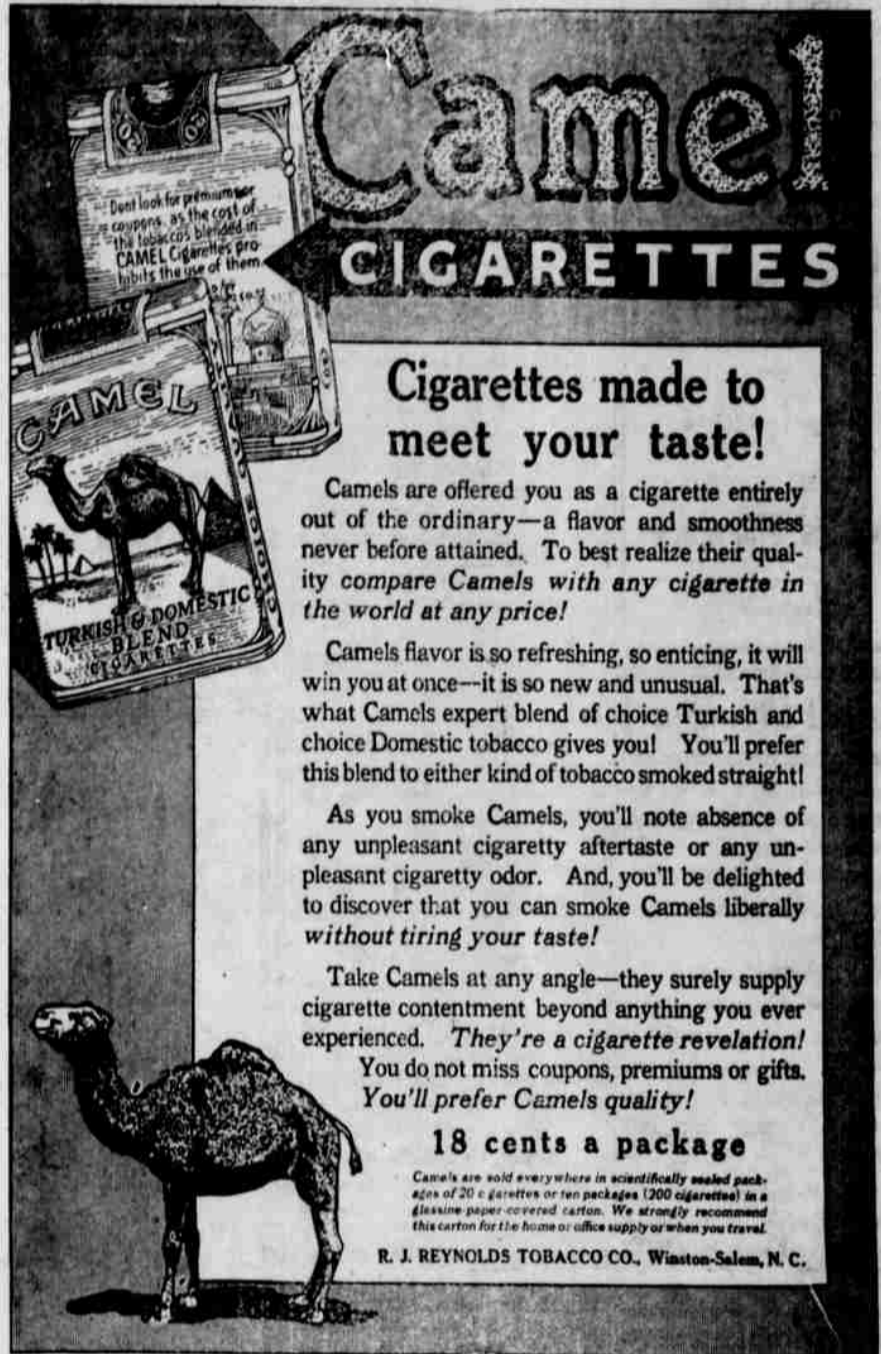
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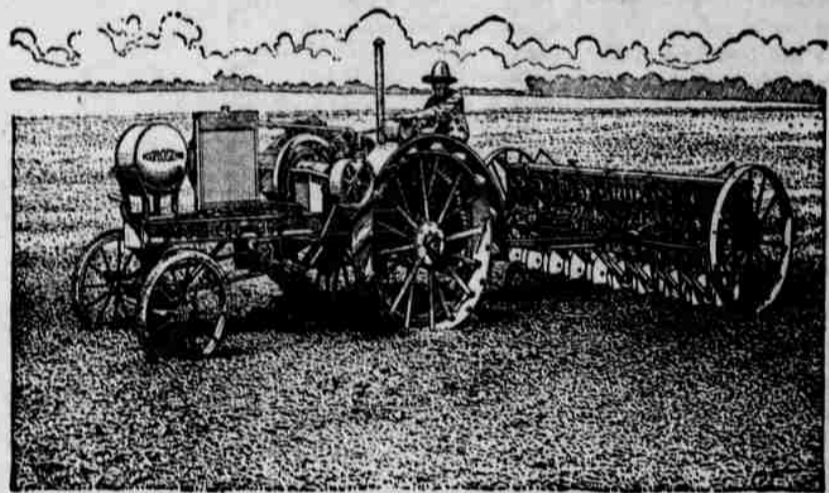
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