

INSTALLMENT ELEVEN-The Story So Far

Laura Maguire, wife of Mike Maguire, happy-go-lucky editor and mayor of Covington, is mother to four children, not too well treated by the depression: Tom, whose real estate job in the big city beeame profitless and who proposed moving to Covington rather than depend on the earnings of Mary Etta, his wife, secretary to a big shot; Alec, who, unable to get a job, runs around with a

CHAPTER XV-Continued

Nevertheless Kathleen had felt in a way revenged. And then Ruth had spoiled everything. She was one of those saccharine persons whose mission in life is to shed sweetness. She cooed like a mourning dove at every opportunity and was quite pretty in a soft, fluttery, ash-blonde way. Her elders said she had a beautiful nature. But she was apt to cloy if taken in steady doses. For that reason Ruth was always avidly interested in the appearance of a new man in town. And somewhere she heard about Ritchie Graham. She promptly telephoned Kathleen and insisted that he be added to the party.

All things considered Kathleen arrived home practically ready to throw things. Laura was lying down with a touch of headache or so she had given out. But when Kathleen heard about Tom she surmised that her mother had gone to bed of a heavy heart. Privately Kathleen thought her brother was well rid of an unpleasant incubus.

To Kathleen's surprise Shirley was also going to the swimming party. They didn't usually run in the same crowd except at very large affairs to which the whole town was invited. But Shirley gave the show away when Kathleen in all innocence asked if they couldn't all four go together. Away from Ritchie, Kathleen was not at all anxious to be alone with Gene Mays.

"Sorry," said Shirley evenly, "but Connie Mays asked us to ride over with her and Lance Ferguson."

"I see," said Kathleen, staring fixedly at the red leather belt she was fastening about her.

She did see-a lot. Of course Connie had engineered the whole thing. She had probably refused to go at all unless Jaird was invited. And Ruth was one of Connie's yes-men. But to get Jaird, Shirley had to be included. Only Connie, with her usual brazen disregard for other people's rights, had arranged that too-to her own taste. Ostensibly Lance, a weak little baa-baa sheep, was Connie's date. Actually he was being taken along for the ride, as Kathleen knew. And of course so did Shirley, even if she did not breathe out fire and brimstone as Kathleen would have done.

In the end they went off with their respective swains, Shirley first. Both Kathleen and Laura noticed that Connie had waited till the last to collect the second girl. And when her smart car disappeared, she was driving as she usually did with one hand, while she faced the back seat and carried on an animated and gesticulative conversation with a rather silent Jaird and a totally silent Shirley.

Hot Shot Mays drove up almost before his sister's dust had settled. He was in a terrific hurry to be on his way. He did not bother to exercise his famous charm on Laura. It was not necessary with most mothers. As a rule they were overwhelmingly on his side. Laura knew he would always be like that. Unnecessarily brusque unless forced to be otherwise. But Kathleen for once missed the little telltale pucker between Laura's eyes. Kathleen had worries of her own.

Gene Mays was a bit overpowering. There was no getting around that. He had a smooth way about him when he strove to please. And he had every intention of pleasing Kathleen. She baffled him a little. Other girls struggled to impress him in a big way. Kathleen reversed the process. It was a new experience for Hot Shot Mays to sit in the uncertain seat. Kathleen even laughed when he ladled out what he called "heavy sugar."

"Maybe I'm boring you," he said at the end of twenty miles, when he seemed to have got no farther fast with his campaign.

"Maybe," agreed Kathleen and smiled.

By the time they reached their destination Gene Mays felt a little like a dirigible in a high wind, and Kathleen's equanimity was somewhat restored. She might not have made any dent on Ritchie Graham's consciousness, but she had Hot Shot Mays doing acrobatics against his will. He was a big bluff as a menace to female hearts, or so it seemed to Kathleen. She had him pawing the air and she could grin at his best efforts. She felt perfectly the mistress of the situation and decidedly cocky and pleased with herself.

CHAPTER XVI

The new Porterville Swimming Pool was ideally situated on the edge of town in a ravine between two fern-clad hills. There were sixty acres of wooded grounds, a huge outdoor lake fed by springs, a number of rustic dressing huts and the usual diving boards, floats and soft drink stands. But the big dining room, like the dancing pavilion, was more impressive than effective. The food tasted as the mechanical orchestration sounded, a bit tinny.

flashy divorcee older than he and on a bet dates up Lou Knight, the town drunk's daughter; Shirley, engaged to Jaird Newsum, also out of work since his father closed up the factory to stop losses and whose marriage is thus delayed; Kathleen, in whom a stranger, Ritchie Graham, also a newspaperman, is interested. Ma Newsum wants Jaird marry Connie Mays, the banker's

"Anyway," as Ruth brightly explained while Ritchie was helping her unload hampers and thermos jugs, "it's so primitive to eat out under the trees, don't you think?"

"Absolutely," he agreed. Kathleen darted him a glance. Ruthie was going strong in her own sweet way. But Ritchie appeared to like his flattery rank. If he was even aware that she was hanging around the outskirts, he concealed it. Shirley was helping Ruth collect the various eatables in a sheltered spot. But Connie Mays never put herself to such inconveniences.

"I'll bet you a kiss, Jaird, that I beat you into the water," she challenged.

"Say," growled Hot Shot Mays, 'did we come out here to swim or what? I'm hot as two firecrackers."

"Come on, Hot Shot," cried Kathleen crossly, slinging her bathing



"You sort of make a feller pin his ears back in that outfit," said Hot Shot Mays.

suit over her shoulder, "how's for getting dressed? And don't be all day about it, Tarzan."

When she emerged in her brief one-piece white suit, a scarlet bandana about her head. Hot Shot was waiting for her at the diving platform, but Jaird and Connie were already in the water.

"You sort of make a feller pin his ears back in that outfit," said Hot Shot Mays as his hard blue eyes traveled over Kathleen's lithe young body. "Listen, Baby, if I was staging beauty contests you could be Miss Universe."

"But you aren't." Kathleen made a beautiful flip-flop in the air for a perfect landing.

He dived after her, hitting the water a split second later. But he failed to overtake her before she crawled up on the raft between Jaird and Connie. The latter looked distinctly annoyed at the intrusion. which did not afflict Kathleen. She even enjoyed it and thought she might stay where she was till Shirley joined them. But Gene Mays had other ideas. He dragged Kathleen off her perch although she fought him like a tigress and sent her to the bottom, clawing and scratching. He howled with mirth when she came up choked and breathless. He managed to pinch her thigh, for which she boxed his ears. But there was no peace from him except to keep swimming just out of his reach. And that was a lit-

"The big stiff," she thought angrily, aware of a catch in her side as she dodged one of his sideswipes.

Jaird swam in to shore to meet Shirley while Connie glowered. It looked as if Ruth was going to get into the water at last. Ritchie was already in his suit and lounging on the end of the pier waiting for her, a cigarette in his mouth. Kathleen paused long enough in her hectic flight from Gene Mays' caveman tactics to observe that Ritchie looked provokingly handsome in his black jersey. She felt she could bear him better if just once he showed to a disadvantage. Hot Shot Mays seized upon her momentary preoccupation with another man to push her head under water until her lungs caught fire. The catch in her side was more pronounced when she again took to flight.

She began to feel a little like a heavy bellows. She tried to edge up to the raft, but Gene yanked her off. She made for the ladder which

It Is Not Too Late

Begin this fine story today. There is still time. daughter. Tom and Mary Etta separate when she refused to give up her job. Banker Mays threatens to break Maguire for criticizing his banking methods. Maguire and Ritchie joyously laugh at him. Kathleen is critical of their recklessness. "Hot Shot" Mays, the banker's son, invites her to a swimming party.

Ritchie grins when she accepts.

led up to the diving platform. Only he was there first, daring her to set foot on a rung. She was beginning to wish that he'd go off somewhere and die for a week or two. Her Mays. But there was still that catch won't bother him in the least." in her side, only more of it.

A little grimly Kathleen made for

the big buoy at the upper end of but ordinarily no swim for her. bright red." Nevertheless, strangely it seemed to come no nearer however many strokes she took, and her limbs felt the open road," he continued. "Then weighted. Lethargy attacked her I've put obstacles all over every arms. She glanced over her shoul- room so there'll be trouble getting der. She was quite far away from anywhere. I'm hanging a dead-end everybody. Even Gene had paused sign at the front door and I put a to filch a pair of water wings from detour marker on the back door to a small girl who was doing her ut- complicate matters." most to hang onto them. Kathleen measured the distance between going back and struggling on, and decided the buoy was nearer. Even every window in the house, breakthen it did not occur to her she might not make it.

neck and was again swimming after be sure I'm hot." her. Kathleen sobbed once. She knew by the exquisiteness of her relief how nearly she had lost her drift. nerve. She had only to stay afloat went under, gasped and almost lacked the energy to come up.

"You would run off and make me wear myself out chasing you!" shouted Gene.

He was only a few feet away, flailing water like a porpoise, and laughing uproariously. If he ducked her again-Kathleen was suddenly frantic. She tried to call out, to tell him fatigue.

a dive for her feet.

He meant to drag her under. With ized that he would probably repeat customed pleasures." the process with appropriate brays of laughter until finally she did not come up at all. And then he would ing on using an auto?" we exfeel dreadful of course. But she claimed. wouldn't be there to witness his remorse. She tried again to call out, my house all fixed up with everyfailed, and saw Gene gathering his huge muscles for the lunge.

she's in trouble?" cried a sharp and I'm putting in a small stove to

voice. But Gene didn't see. He leaped. Only a fist caught him on the jaw and dropped him back in his tracks. "Put your hand on my shoulder," Ritchie Graham commanded Kath-

But she was past doing even that. White as death, she slid down into the water. Down. Down. Down. She thought listlessly that it was perilously easy to die. Only Ritchie's hand closed on her shoulder. He had dived after her. They rose to the surface. Keeping one arm about her waist he towed her to the buoy. picked her up in his long strong arms and laid out her full length on

her face like a wet paper doll. After a while Kathleen's shuddering breaths subsided to something approaching normal. She sat up dizzily. "Thanks," she said in an un- That tender care, massage, and steady voice.

"Don't mention it." He did not look at her. Apparently he was a little bored at having dragged her from a watery grave. Or did he realize that it had been as bad as that?

She flushed, and sudden tears burned her eyes. "Maybe you'd bet- And leveled to the skin and ter throw me back in if that's the way you feel about it," she said bitterly.

He turned with one of those quick movements that always surprised her. He was very white. And his gray eyes blazed at her. "I don't trifle, Kathleen," he said in a rough uneven voice. "I told you once before I'm no ladies' man. I wouldn't flirt with you or anyone else."

"I don't know what you mean." "You know exactly what I mean. Ever since the first time I saw you, your eyes have dared me to do this -and this-and this."

His arms were about her. Gripping her in a flerce embrace that hurt. His lips hurt too. Because no plaster across the bridge of your his kisses were more antagonistic nose. than tender. And they pushed Kathleen across the border of everything she had ever known into a region of strange pain and a heartbreaking ecstasy.

"I hate you!" she blazed.

"Do you?" "Yes!"

He made her a little mocking bow. 'Probably we were meant to hate each other like hell or else-" his voice shook-"to love each other that way."

"I don't love you," she cried. But Ritchie had slid off the float and was swimming to shore. (TO BE CONTINUED)



ELMER TWITCHELL ON THE GAS CRISIS

"I'm all set for this gasoline rationing," declared Elmer Twitchell today. "Ain't a bit worried. Got myself all adjusted. Won't notice it at all."

"How so?" we asked.

"Preparedness," snapped Elmer. "Been salting it away or got a pull with a gasoline bootlegger?"

"Neither," explained Mr. Twitchell. "I've done nothing beyond the pointed face took on a slightly hag- reach of any other American. Any gard look. She did not beg for quar- auto owner can take the same steps ter. Somehow one didn't with Gene I have so that the gas shortage

"Speak. What have you done?" "Well, I'll tell you," said Elmer. "It's very simple. First of all, I've the lake. It was quite a distance, painted every light in the house a "What's the big idea?"

"I want the full atmosphere of

"Yes, but . "Don't interrupt," he snapped. 'I'm putting windshield wipers on ing them first. I mean breaking

the windshield wipers, not the win-Again she risked a glance over dows. I want to be sure none of POULTRY AND RABBITS WANTED her shoulder. Hope clanged a bra- 'em work. Then I'm setting the zen bell in her heart. Gene had furnace on full tilt and removing the draped the water wings about his thermostatic adjustments. I want to

We were beginning to get the

"I'm putting in a big stock of till Gene reached her. She turned horsemeat, frankfurters and stale over on her back. But the cramp rolls, a lot of wet peanuts and plenty in her side doubled her up. She of bananas and soda pop. Enough



she was exhausted. But the muscles to last all fall and winter," he conin her throat locked with panic and tinued. "And I've ordered a four months' supply of pickles, hard-"All that goes down is bound to boiled eggs and all the other junk come up!" bawled Gene and made people eat in their Sunday afternoon pleasure trips. Gas or no gas. I don't want to take any chance a terrible bitterness Kathleen real- on being cut off from all my ac-

"You mean you're not even count-

"Exactly," said Elmer. "I'll have thing I can get through motoring I'm even arranging to have grease "You damned fool, can't you see put all over the chairs and walls burn nothing but rubber. And see this?"

Elmer held up a phonograph rec-

"Put it on the machine and all it does is just snarl in different keys. Every little while a voice yells, 'Get over, ya big bum!"

Mr. Twitchell was well pleased with himself.

"It's a pretty good idea," we agreed.

"Good my eye. It's perfect," concluded Elmer. "Without a pint of gasoline to my name I'm all set to enjoy everything at home that I would enjoy if I went out in the auto."

INEXPLICABLE

It seems to me somewhat ironic, Should be required of men who

cherish A scalp that's adequately hairish. Whereas unwanted hair that's

strewn Across the chin and cheeks, though hewn

thwarted When it is barely getting started,

Despite mistreatment, curse, and scorning Returns augmented every morning.

-Richard Armour. . . . "New automobiles will lose their

decorative touch and frills."-Head-We may even have to get along for two years in succession with the

same radiator ornament. Autumn: When you feel so strange

going around with no broken-bottle wounds in your feet, no mustard on your shirt, no sand in your ears and

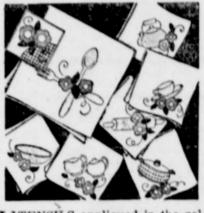
VAGABONDIA

Books and beer upon a table, A pinch of snuff for those who're able; A pipe of 'baccy for a friend

Whom fortune may see fit to send: So shall mine house well ordered be For a friend who finds his friend in me.

-Gordon R. Higham.

Elmer Twitchell insists that he drove up to a fashionable pumping station Sunday and found a sign "Reserved" on it.



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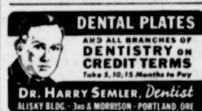
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If you get simple beauty, and nought else, you get the best thing god invents.-Browning.



Behind the Blush The man that blushes is not quite a brute.

