

# Alabaster Lamps

By MARGARET TURNBULL

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WNU Service

## CHAPTER XI—Continued

Mary had made brief visits to St. Mark's with her mother, but now she hurried up the steep stone stairs toward the galleries and the capello di oro. A service was in progress before one of the altars.

Mary paused a moment to see the genial old custodian, whose greeting was as toothless as it was friendly. As she stood peering down into the dim church, she was conscious of some one near her, watching her. She looked up—into Ned Carter's eyes.

She could scarcely believe it, and yet something she read in his eyes made her stretch out her hand. Ned grasped it, and that steadied her. She thought she heard him murmur "Mary." She was not sure. She turned, confusedly, her hand still unaccountably in his, and they went through the doorway that led to the golden horses. It was so narrow here that quite naturally she recovered her hand. As they stepped out into the sunshine, and the cool sea breeze, Mary felt herself able to face Ned.

To her conscious amazement, she found this no easy thing to do. There was a shining something in his eyes, to which she seemed loathe to give a name, or to fully recognize. There was so much confusion in her mind, thoughts half formed flitting across it like birds of the night, that she finally left it to Ned to break the silence. All he seemed able to say was "Mary!" "Are you here," Mary began desperately, "with me—"

Ned gave a swift look about to assure himself that they were alone.

"Oh, what does it matter who I am with? I'm here because you are here, and I couldn't stay in Clover Hollow without you. I've followed you, Mary, to tell you—"

"Hush!" said Mary warningly, and put her finger gently against his lips, for out of the little doorway had appeared the wondering heads of a German youth of about twenty, and his bride.

Mary moved away, seated herself on the stone parapet beneath the horses and looked out over the piazza. Ned stood beside her, looking down.

"My father—" she began.

"Yes, I came here with C. M. Dabbs, and I know where he is, but I'm not to meet him for half an hour yet. Surely you can listen to me for that length of time. If you don't," he threatened, "I won't tell you where to find him. If you're kind to me, I'll lead you to him."

"Mr. Carter, aren't you a little sudden in your methods?"

"I'm anything you like except 'Mr. Carter.' And if I seem sudden, look at the provocation. At a certain shop your father is waiting, and once he gets within hailing distance I'll be pushed, shoved, ignored or kicked into the background. So, Mary—No you don't, my dear. There's absolutely no use in our roaming around looking at things in shop windows. Down this alley-way there's a flight of stone steps leading to the canal. If you come that way, we could wait in the shade of a gondola."

"To take me to father?"

"Eventually, yes," admitted Ned, "but primarily to listen to me."

"About father? Oh, I should love to hear about him!"

"Would you? Well, I've lots to tell. A wonderful traveling companion. But first you must hear about me."

They had reached one step and while Ned signaled a passing gondola, Mary thought of him and wondered at herself. Why should she go with him? Mother would never approve of this! Nevertheless, she waited for his gondola and listened to him with a smile. It was like walking into a trap, but was she so unwilling to be caught?

She had one wild impulse toward flight as Ned concentrated his attention upon getting the gondola ready for his lady. It would be so easy to slip away now. As she made the first step his hand was on her arm, very gently but compellingly, and she had stepped into the gondola.

They sat side by side for a few moments in silence as the gondola made its way into the Grand canal. Then Ned turned to her and spoke about Venice, its sudden and unexpected charm for him when he had first seen the city. He loved it. This lazy method of locomotion was perfect. Did she not think so? Mary could rhapsodize with him over Venice to his heart's content, and began to think she had been fearful without cause.

They had turned from the Grand canal into a narrower, half-deserted looking waterway, quite evidently leading to the private entrance of several old palaces. Over the wall of one streamered green branches and creepers, the remains of an old garden, once hidden from the public eye. The canal was beautiful, and dark with shade. Here and there long splashes of sunlight stole between thick walls and made bars across the water.

"I knew you'd love it. I've always planned to bring the girl I—some day I meant to bring—Mary, I've kept it for you. Isn't it lovely?"

Before Mary could reply, her hand

was crushed in his, his shoulder was against her own and his lips close to her ear were murmuring, so that she alone could hear all that he longed to tell her. It was extremely jerky and incoherent. In fact, there was very little sense in it. It was rather like what every man does with his preconceived idea of how he is going to conduct his love scene. Ned, being very much in love, made a bad botch of it. In fact, the astonished Mary could not distinguish anything except that she was disturbing the even tenor of his life considerably, that she was adorable, and—though everything was implied that should have been implied there was not a single word about marriage or engagement. Most of it was "Oh, Mary!"

They were approaching the old bridge. The bridge, low and dark, seemed to Mary the proper place to arrest the stream of Ned's eloquence. She determined to release her hand. It did not seem easy. She tried it, however, and turned her face so that she might look at him and make him understand. As she turned, the lips so close to her ear brushed her cheek, met her mouth and clung there.

It was the first time—for Mary. Other men had tried to kiss her mouth, just as other men had asked her to marry them, but none had succeeded.

When the gondola shot from under the bridge into the sunlight, the gondolier, who of course must have suspected, if he had not seen, burst out into one of his cries of warning that precede a turning. Ned involuntarily straightened up, came out of his dream and looked guiltily at Mary.

Mary was furious. Her cheeks flamed. She felt her whole body was one burning blush. She hated him. It was as though he had kissed her in the open street. But she hated herself more, for even while she blushed to remember his lips, she had a horrible suspicion that she would like to be kissed again.

## CHAPTER XII

How can a man apologize for kissing a lady? It's not done. One either goes on, or leaves off, and if circumstances or places compel one to leave off abruptly, then surely the lady should understand.

Ned, who had kissed several on the way to Mary, was completely at a loss. None of them had taken it just like this; grown red, then silent, and refused to meet his eyes. He would not have cared if they had, but he did care now. He made one or two attempts at speech, but the shoulder shrank from his, the hand refused to be held, and the face remained averted.

The high gods, who love a lover, saw his plight and gave Ned the only words that could help him.

"I'm not sorry. But I am sorry you take it like this."

A voice from far away said: "It was like—like a servant girl out with a—"

"Grocer's boy," finished Ned. "I suppose that's why you feel insulted."

The colored marble he had been sitting beside for the last few moments, returned to life. "Ned Carter! You know it wasn't that. Naturally I resented you—" but the voice stopped abruptly and the blue eyes had a haze of tears.

Ned gathered up the limp hand again, very gently, and kept his eyes fixed on the water of the sluggish canal. "What am I to do? How are you to know that I am mad about you, unless I tell you? And how can you know whether you like kissing me, unless I try it?"

"You're outrageous; I know nothing about you, and to—oh—in a gondola—in broad daylight!"

Ned's laugh echoed across the canal. "Oh, Mary, I adore you. How long will it take you to learn that by heart? I'll say it all over again, tonight, and in the darkest corner of Venice."

"You will not get a chance. You will please lend now, and take me to my father."

"If I do, will you think about me?"

"Oh, yes, I'll think about you," and with that Ned had to be content.

"Mary, your father's very fond of me."

"That's the one thing I know in your favor."

"If you ask Claude Dabbs, he will tell you all about me."

"I shall not ask my father."

This being exceedingly satisfactory to Ned, he went on a few steps in silence, glancing down at the adorable hat this loveliest of ladies wore. It was faced with blue that matched her eyes. He wished she would look up. "How are you to know—if you do not ask?"

She looked up, and down again quickly. "Oh, I shall know."

"If you leave it to your heart," he murmured close to her ear, "I shall be satisfied."

"If my father were not standing there watching us," said Mary in the same conversational tone, "I would slap you, good and hard."

She left him and went forward eagerly to greet Claude. He came as eagerly to meet his girl, and Ned found himself very much out of the picture. The girl, who had been hard to him, was very sweet and daughterly to Claude. It was Claude who kindly held Ned within the charmed circle, and Mary who made him feel out of touch.

All the rest of that lovely afternoon Mary wandered about with the two men who loved her. It was agreed between Mary and Claude Dabbs that if Polly kept to her room that night, Mary should contrive to dine with him. She could, without actually telling a fib, she assured Claude, allow her mother to suppose that she was dining with the Farleys, and Mrs. Farley was a dear and would understand if Mary told her at the last minute that she was dining with friends. She would telephone from her hotel and Claude could come and take her to his, and bring her back.

With this they had to be content. They parted from Mary before they reached the entrance to her hotel.

Polly's headache was better, but she decided not to get up. When Mary came into her room, ready to go to dinner, Polly was sitting up in bed, a tray before her.

"My word, Mary, you look sweet. Turn around and let me see if I'll like you as well when you leave the room as I do when you come in."

"The Farleys ought to appreciate you, Mary. Is young Farley to be there tonight? If his mother knew we were poor it might make a difference, you know."

"I hope it does," Mary answered lightly, apparently engrossed with her image in the glass. "I could do with less of young Farley."

Then what is it, her mother thought, that makes her look just that way? It must be a man!

"Anyone interesting among the new arrivals?"

"I don't know," Mary answered honestly. "I'll look them over when I go down, and report."

She kissed her mother and hurried away.

Polly rested back against her pillows and sighed. How long could she keep Mary? Not very long, if the men of this generation were at all like those of the last. Well, at any rate Claude should not have her. Mary must have her chance and not be dragged back to a village grocery store—the same one from which her mother had fled so many years ago.

Mary explained to Mrs. Farley, having first telephoned Claude, that she was dining with an old friend.

Mrs. Farley, who had no daughters and adored Mary, watched with interest Mary's meeting with a big, dark, middle-aged man who looked rather distinguished.

Mary thought her father looked stunning. It was frightfully romantic, she told him, eloping with one's father in a gondola.

"You wouldn't even look at me if Mother were here in all her glory. Mother is—oh, Father, Mother is a perfect peach!"

"There was a poet, long ago, who put what I feel about Polly in a nutshell," Claude answered. "It was something about: 'If she isn't my peach, I don't care how peachy she is.'"

"Father! Stop! Don't murder. 'If she be not fair for me, What care I how fair she be.'"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## Provided Method of Escape From Indians

Built in 1663, the oldest brick house in Virginia stands on the south bank of James river, about midway between Surrey Court House and Scotland Wharf. It is called Smith's Fort, but as a matter of historical accuracy the building erected by Capt. John Smith in 1608 and named by him New Fort stood about a quarter of a mile to the west of this house and now few traces of the old Indian defense are to be seen. The Colonial records show that the house was built by Thomas Warren in 1663 on land bought by him from Thomas Rolfe, son of John Rolfe and Pocahontas, daughter of the famous Indian King Powhatan. There is a tradition connected with one of the closets in this aged house. From one

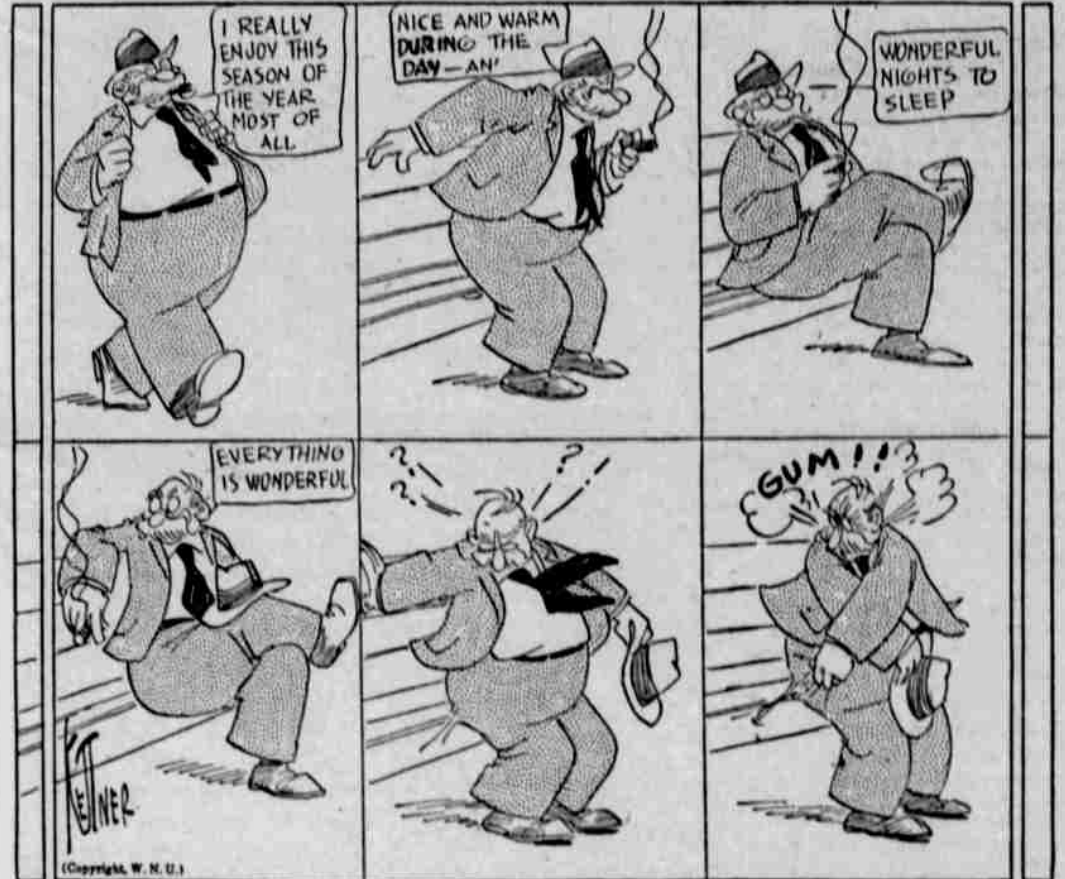
in an upper room a trap door and a stationary ladder led down to a brick walled closet in the basement from which it is said an underground passage led to the original Smith's fort on the banks of a creek nearly a quarter of a mile away. It is supposed that the underground passage, long since fallen in, enabled many an occupant of the house to escape when the Indians had launched an attack.—Baltimore Sun.

## Middle of Road's Crowded

Not only does every question have two sides, but some politicians manage to get on both.—Des Moines Register.

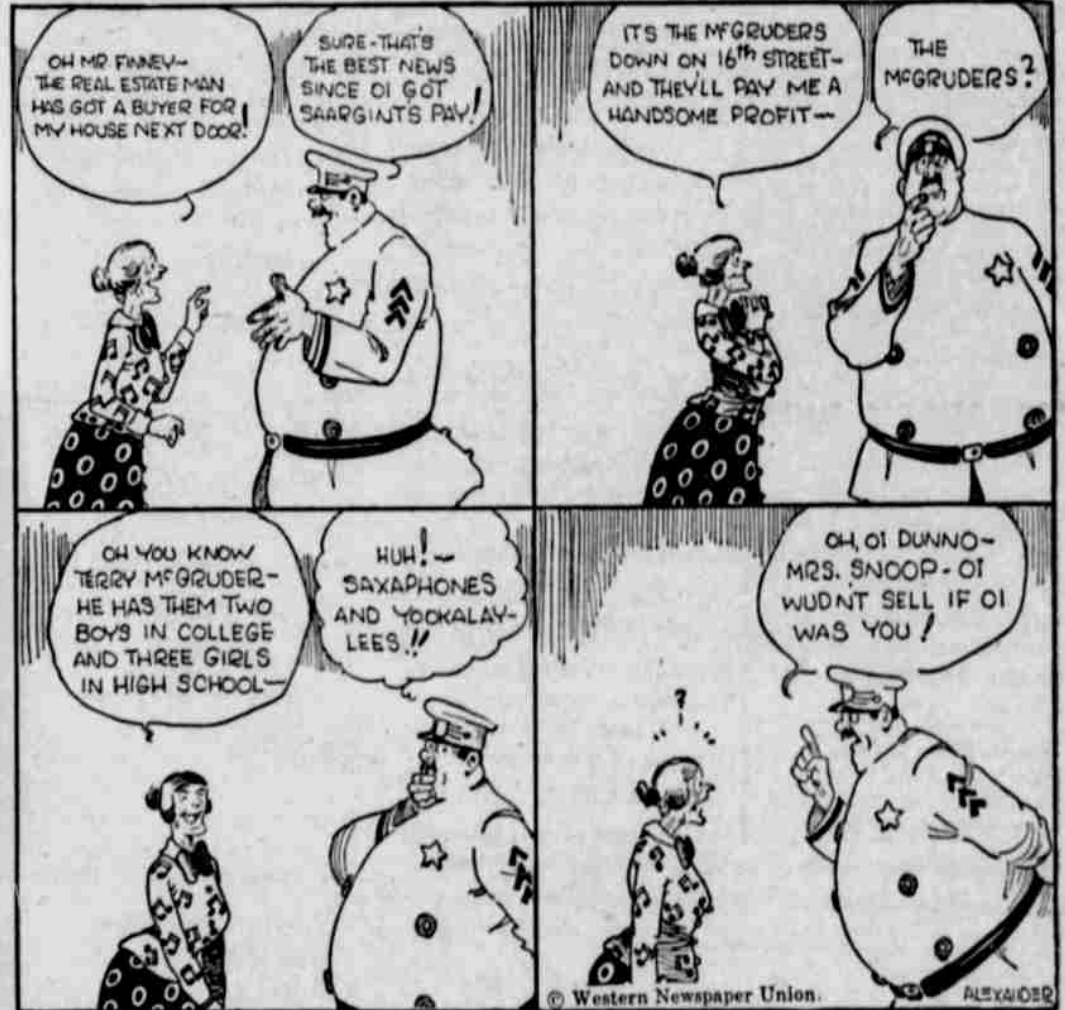
# OUR COMIC SECTION

## Our Pet Peeve



## FINNEY OF THE FORCE

## Finney Will Put Up With Snoop



## THE FEATHERHEADS

## Fanny Splashes Her Oar

