SPITE MARRIAGE

by Katharine Haviland-Taylor

SYNOPSIS: While Bob Powers closes up his work in Mexico, Marsha, his wife, is caring for Bob's mother in New York. Marsha and Bob have been on the verge of divorce, but when Mrs. Powers becomes incurably ill, Bob decides they must pretend to love each other for her sake. Marsha writes to ask whether her careful reports of his mother's condition annoy Bob.

Chapter 24

TORN LETTER

BOB'S situation had been even more difficult than had been Marsha's. He was straining to accomplish in one week more than two men could in a month, his one thought being to get his work far enough along so that he could cut and run. The day's work done, there was usually nothing left for him but moody reverie or wonder.

He could not mingle with his associates or stay with them mentally even when they were loudest. They watched him anxiously, and, because he was a general favorite, they forgave his nervous irritability.

Young Todd, the insatiable gossip always found in every group of any size, wondered (aloud) why there was no portrait, in Powers' diggings, of Powers' wife. A more robust type wheeled on him to order

Bob was doing two men's work, and more.

him to silence and in terms that left no doubt of his being heeded.

"Like to stir up talk, wouldn't you?" Young Todd heard. "And a lot of reason for it, with Powers spending every free hour reading her letters. Alexander says he's wakened at night to see Bob reading 'em by the light of a candle. So suppose you shut up!"

Young Todd did, but he could not help wondering why Powers had no portrait of his wife, while he had two of his mother; silverframed. "It is odd!" he murmured to himself, in his precise and, to men, maddening way. "Very odd!"

Bob had been starved for word from Marsha; personal word of her. He had read every letter until its creases were worn and a trifle soiled. He looked between the lines about his mother, lines that counted and meant everything, to try to decipher how Marsha was.

And upon that late February evening, when he read the letter in which Marsha asked him whether she annoyed him with too much detail, he laughed almost naturally. He pulled a sheet of paper from a rudely made rack—he was sitting by a table which served as a desk—and then recklessly, he scrawled:

"YES, your letters annoy me; they annoy me so deeply that I keep Vicente Gonzales in town, having reserved a permanent seat for him in the post-office.

"You see, I keep thinking that a miracle is going to happen and that, in one of your extra letters which are not written for effect upon mother, you will some day slip in a 'dear.' But—they tell much of you, without a 'dear,' and they are wonderful letters, and they make me wonder how long my life must be without you.

"Yes, they are very wonderful letters and I always hope, as I see Vicente and his mule swinging into the gulch and crawling up to us that he will bring more than John Drake's cut plug and Alexander's home papers and the sugar or tea for Ling; my hope being for one of those letters that 'annoys' me.

"And sometimes I dream, (this is badly mixed, but thinking of you I can't be coherent; I am only very hungry thinking of you, dearest) sometimes I dream that this time there will be a gently sincere and affectionate letter from you in the idle bag.

"Yet I know I am a fool to dream so, for I would know if you wrote that sort. There would be a new, bright star in my sky, down here, and I, looking up, would say, 'There's a letter of the sort I need coming to me from my wife! Get it, muy pronto, Vicente, or I will kill you!'

"Or perhaps I would run all the way myself, (and I rather think I would) because it would be so much easier than waiting."

He sat back. His own hurried scrawl mocked and laughed at him. Suddenly, and with unnecessary energy, he tore the sheet in many small pieces and dropped them to the floor.

"I say," remonstrated Alexander, whose bed-hour had been ignored because of a new detective tale. "Ling cleaned up here today for the first time in three months. That's a hell of a way to encourage him!"

"I'LL pick them up," Bob muttered and he did, in a somewhat shamed, foolish way. He wired Marsha the next day, fearing she might wait for his answer before she wrote again: "PARENTHESIS LETTERS HELP MORE THAN I CAN SAY AND I THANK YOU STOP PLEASE WRITE AS OFTEN AS YOU CAN WITHOUT TAXING YOUR STRENGTH STOP BOB PARENTHESIS."

But even with wiring there was a gap he felt to be years long, between those uncensored histories Marsha wrote for him. However, at length he read, and his heart pounded.

"This afternoon your mother and I looked at your baby clothes and she did enjoy it! Forgive me if I dare even more than usual to draw too close here, (I have just had your wire; I thank you for it) but I do want to express something of my own personal feeling.

"I do think that you should now be drawing much comfort from the fact that you have always been so good a son. You've made your mother so happy; you have never, in any way, failed her I will write you, at your mother's dictation, tomorrow. Marsha."

He replied in a stilted way, with: "(As I said before write me anything—everything—you will. Your letters, their length; content could not annoy me!)" then, under the push of all he felt, he added, "(They mean more to me, Marsha, than you will ever know.)"

But he scratched this out with a letter opener that one of the newest and still ambitious Northern recruits had made. After he did it he sat looking at the spot that he had scratched, which tells lots even to those souls who have the wisdom to let psychoanalysis go its own way undisturbed.

He longed for the relief of writing all he felt to her; he found himself aching to do it in the middle of those sleepless dreams which he had assured her would be, and which were. During the night he composed the most amazing of screeds—sometimes of a purely friendly nature, and sometimes of quite another sort.

(Copyright, 1934, by K. Haviland-Taylor)

Bob sustains a great shock, tomorrow.

REPORT ON GRAIN CROP INDICATES LOSS BY DROUGHT

WASHINGTON, Aug. 10.—(AP)—Conditions August 1 indicated a wheat crop of 490,960,000 bushels and corn 1,607,108,000 bushels, reflecting devastation by the drought.

The department of agriculture made these forecasts today.

A month ago the indicated wheat crop was 484,000,000 bushels, compared with 528,000,000 harvested last year.

Corn last month was expected to be 2,113,000,000 bushels, against 2,344,000,000 last year.

The preliminary estimate of the winter wheat crop was placed today at 400,522,000 bushels, compared with 394,000,000 a month ago, 352,000,000 last year and 632,000,000 the 1927-31 average.

Spring wheat production is indicated as 90,438,000 bushels, compared with 89,400,000 a month ago, 176,000,000 last year and 254,000,000 the five-year average.

Production of other important crops indicated by their August 1 condition, was announced as follows:

Oats 545,345,000 bushels, compared with 568,000,000 last month, 732,000,000 last year and 1,187,000,000 the five-year average.

Barley, 119,000,000 bushels, against 125,000,000 last month, 157,000,000 last year, and 270,000,000 five year average.

Hay (tame) 49,000,000 tons, against 52,000,000 last month, 66,000,000 last year and 72,300,000 five-year average.

Beans (dry edible) 9,200,000 bags of 100 lbs., against 10,400,000 last month, 12,300,000 last year, and 11,600,000 five-year average.

Apples, 110,000,000 bushels, against 112,000,000 last month, 143,000,000 last year and 156,000,000 five-year average.

Peaches, 45,400,000 bushels, against 48,700,000 last month, 44,900,000 last year, and 57,900,000 five-year average.

Pears, 22,900,000 bushels, against 22,400,000 last month, 21,300,000 last year, and 22,500,000 five-year average.

Grapes, 1,880,000 tons, against 1,960,000 last month, 1,910,000 last year and 2,280,000 five-year average.

Potatoes, 327,000,000 bushels, against 348,000,000 last month, 320,000,000 last year, and 366,000,000 five-year average.

Fall and Winter Goods Ready Soon Burelsons' Store

Exceptionally smart lines of fall and winter apparel for Medford and southern Oregon women, selected by Mr. and Mrs. E. T. Burelson in San Francisco during the recent market week, will be received at Burelson's ladies' ready-towear store within the next ten days.

Style shows at the Palace hotel were attended by Mr. and Mrs. Burelson August 8 and 9. Black predominated, while green and brown proved to be favorite fall colors.

Dresses for half and large sizes were purchased by the Burelson's from eastern firms whose representatives were at the St. Francis hotel. Mr. Burelson dealt with these firms when he was in business in other states, he said yesterday, and is well-acquainted with their merchandise.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

PLENTY OF FOOD, FEWER SIRLOINS, WALLACE CLAIMS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 11.—(AP)—Food prices will be "materially higher" next year, says Secretary Wallace, but no shortage is expected.

The drought, which has driven prospective food and feed supplies down to the lowest point in 30 years, is responsible.

In 1935 consumers will not enjoy the "customary supply of sirloin steaks and pork chops," Wallace declared, "but there will be plenty of food to keep everyone in the best of health."

Yesterday's crop report estimated that production of 32 principal crops will be 22 per cent below the average of the past 13 years. Wallace said: "Prices will necessarily be materially higher" but "the essential problem is still the city problem of effective channels of distribution."

He added that he would prevent by every means possible speculation and profiteering in foodstuffs.

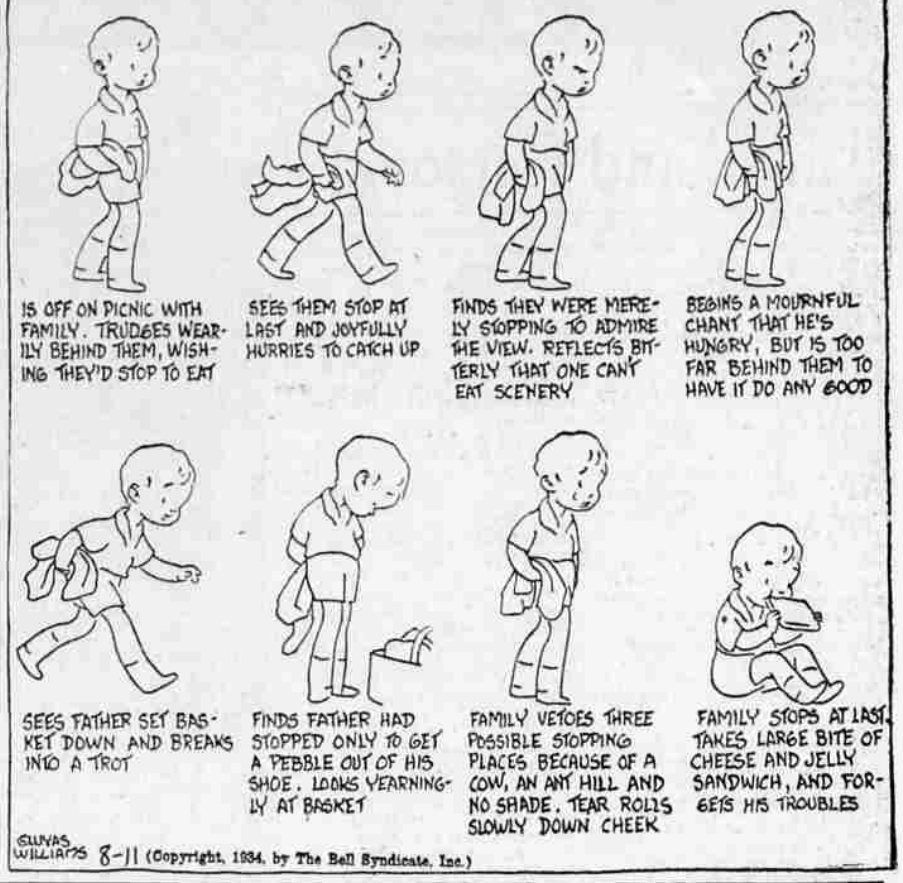
The secretary also declared that drought damage revealed by the report "makes necessary very great modifications" in crop curtailment plans for 1935.

To avoid getting production out of balance again, however, "it will be necessary to have some sort of control," even though acreage cuts are not called for, he said.

"It would seem to be essential to be in a position to resume control in 1936," he said.

Use Mail Tribune want ads.

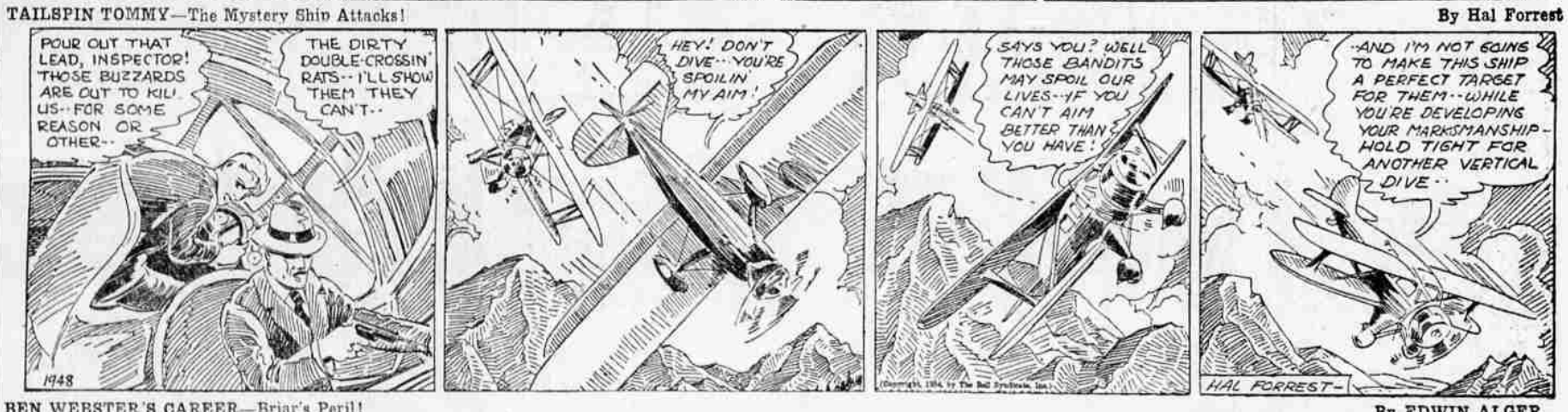
TIME TO EAT — By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



GLUYAS WILLIAMS 8-11 (Copyright, 1934, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

S'MATTER POP— By C. M. Payne

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Mystery Ship Attacks! By Hal Forrest



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Briar's Peril! By EDWIN ALGER

THE NEBBS—How Nice You Look By Sol Hess

BRINGING UP FATHER By George McManus

WENATCHEE BARS IMMATURE APPLES TO HOME MARKETS

WENATCHEE, Wash., Aug. 11.—(AP)—An order stopping shipment of "orchard run early" and other immature apples to domestic markets was issued here today by Walter J. Robinson, director of agriculture. The ruling becomes effective immediately.

Movement of such fruit will be permitted only for export under special permit. The fruit must be routed direct to its foreign destination and no diversion will be permitted.

The action was taken at the request of a large number of growers and shippers, Robinson said. They feared that immature fruit on domestic markets would have a bad effect on the latter deal by giving all apples a bad reputation.

Wool Mart Broader, Held Hopeful Sign

BOSTON, Aug. 11.—(AP)—(USDA)—Business in the Boston wool market during the past week has shown a tendency to broaden. Sales continued scattered, and most transactions were of very moderate volume. The increase in sales, even though it was small, was regarded by some of the trade as a hopeful sign as it came on the lines that had been inactive for several weeks. The lower price levels recently quoted on the western grown wools were believed to have some influence in the increased trade. Fleeces were very quiet.

If you want a really beautiful Permanent, call 101, Medford Beauty Shop, N. Central.