

SPITE MARRIAGE

by Katharine Harland Taylor

SYNOPSIS: Because of his father's stubborn refusal to understand his wife's relation with one of her friends, they are on the verge of divorce. But Bob's mother falls ill, the divorce is postponed, and while Marsha, his wife, nurses the dying woman, Bob hurries to Mexico to close out his affairs there. Bob is telegraphed that his mother has died; he has returned to New York wondering what reception Marsha will give him.

Chapter 36

MARSHA'S GREETING

"MY DEAR!" Bob heard Marsha call, and suddenly his world was reeling. He had not dreamed that she would kiss him, press close to him and cling.

Bartholomew had tipped away. She had not made the scene for Bartholomew. He found he could not loose her hands, and that he could not speak. He saw she was pitifully weary, more uncertain and younger than he had thought she could seem, and obviously smitten by the blow he had thought would be his alone.

"You're tired," he heard himself say after some interval; "criminally, tragically tired. Have you been quite done in by this?"

She could not respond; she shook her head vehemently, and tried to smile. The wry twist of her lips made his eyes smart.

"We'll fix you up!" he promised, sounding angry. He had left too much to her; he had abused her in thinking her to be the fabric that would be untouched by tragedy that was not hers alone. He felt her hand upon his arm and patting it nervously, absurdly.

"You must be tired," she stated, "and you must eat some luncheon. It's waiting you."

"I don't seem" (again the numbness that slowed his speech was gripping him) "to be hungry."

"I know. But you'll try to eat!" she questioned and she raised an anxious face to his after her words. He promised he would try to eat and an hour later she sat opposite him at a small table she had set before the drawing-room fire.

The arrangement had been thoughtful of Marsha, he realized. She had known how the empty place at the dining-room table would affect him. He found himself eating more heartily than he had in days and even tasting the food. Up to that moment all foods had been the same; flavorless and yet apt to nauseate one as one chewed methodically.

"What has wrecked you so?" he asked abruptly.

She laughed, but her eyes filled; "How delightfully courtly," she murmured.

"Oh," he murmured faintly, "you're prettier than ever, if you want that, but you're ill. I left too much to you."

"No!" she contradicted violently; "I would not have been denied doing anything I did!"

She reached quickly for a glass of water; he saw the shaking of her hand as she drank. Then, a trifle steadied, she smiled almost naturally at him. Bartholomew entered with the coffee tray which she set upon a low table by Marsha's side. He disappeared, closing the door after himself.

"I'm ready to talk of anything any time you want to," she said.

MARSHA told Bob, quite evenly, but in a voice that now and again grew a trifle faint of the funeral of the beautiful flowers, of how quite everyone Mrs. Powers had known had sent them. She had a list of people who had sent the flowers, Marsha stated and of what sorts they had sent.

She felt Bob would have liked the simple service; she had arranged it with thought of his taste, and of his mother's liking for simplicity. She told of notes that had come and of how she had answered them.

He realized, sitting sagged in his chair, that she had, with great care, collected every bit of information that she felt would help him. There was a gentle, every-day steadiness about her narration that steadied him.

He thought, "After all, she is not so deeply touched, and there is something about remoteness, callousness, that helps others at times—like these, if she had cried—where would I have been?"

She thought, "I am doing this it is helping him!" She had rehearsed it again and again, and again, but she had never once quite finished the rehearsal without a stiffening of throat and that shaking which forewarns of going to pieces.

"Did—did she suffer?" he managed to ask.

"No, Bob!—really no, not at the last. It was entirely peaceful." She paused a moment to sip her coffee; he was staring sombrely at the rug at his feet. He did not see her trembling, she realized with a covert, testing glance. And the fact that she was doing it rather well, gave her new strength.

She told Bob next of what his mother had said of him; of all that had happened. He seemed to listen sullenly, but she understood his suffering.

"Was it reasonable or fair?" he questioned abruptly. She knew Bob spoke of his failure to reach home in time.

"No," she answered, "I don't think it was. But it is one of those facts that can curdle a life if you'll let it. You'd better talk all you can of your resentment. I think it rather helps."

He said, frowning, moving uneasily, "I'd so wanted to come; I'd thought so continually of it. And there was no getting away. I'm not the world's marvel, but I was the only man they could get now who could swing that job. And my pausing meant stopping the work of others. They couldn't stand the financial strain of any pause."

"I thought of it, weighed it. I couldn't see how I could leave—" "I know," he heard, "and so did you your mother; she understood perfectly. She spoke again and again in a way that made me know she did. And the doctor had told me, and I'd written you, that her life would be longer. You must not reproach yourself."

He ran his hands through his stiff, sandy hair; "for the sake of the workers and the company the work had to go on!" he said jerkily, "but it wasn't reasonable for God, or whatever it is who runs things, to make me—the one man fitted to the job. I thought—"

"I know," Marsha murmured. Bob thought dully, "You have the most beautiful eyes—" they were filled with sympathy and feeling; and they seemed to caress him.

"YOU see, I wanted to come every second. But I kept thinking of what my betrayed trust would mean to workers, stockholders, to the men who head the firm."

"I know," Marsha murmured yet again. Once more he saw, and acutely, her eyes; her wonderfully kind and beautiful eyes. For a moment he was silent, looking into them; he saw her flush slightly and realized how pale she had been.

"It wasn't reasonable, was it?" he probed as would a child who is punished unjustly.

"It doesn't seem so, Bob," she conceded, "but it is a fact you can't change."

"Am I a weak whiner?" "No, oh no! Talk it out all you can; your resentment, but remember that your measure must be, now, a little small."

He poured himself another cup of coffee; she leaned across the table to drop a half lump of sugar into the cup.

"You remember well," he said, and he saw her eyes veiled by hurt. "I do remember rather too well, sometimes," she agreed. He would never know how she remembered, of course, she reasoned, nor of how the lean "feed on foods the fat of heart" heaps.

Hither stupidly he brought forth his cigarette, and held a lighter to hers and then to his. As the smoke circled and rose to make a faint blue haze in the stately room he found himself talking of things that had troubled him all the way home. There were other things that bothered him; little neglects that had grown disproportionate because of the finality of death. One year he'd forgotten her birthday until it was well past. On another occasion he had laughed over those standing ash trays and it seemed she had got him one for a surprise. . . . He stopped speaking, and Marsha leaned forward to cover his hand with hers.

"You are morbid," she said. "You won't be able to help being so, I am afraid, but you can help yourself a little by realizing that you are morbid, and unfair to yourself. You were always so fine to her! So dear. Please believe me!"

He was afraid to move his hand, for fear that hers might be taken from it. After a few seconds, she slipped her other hand beneath Bob's, and so clasped it between both of hers. It seemed as if she understood his needs and much he could not say.

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Bob and Marsha return, Monday, to their own problem.

HANG NAZI COPS IN HEAVY RAIN

VIENNA, Austria, Aug. 14.—(AP)—While pouring rain drenched the improvised gallows four policemen were hanged tonight three hours after they were convicted of complicity in the Nazi uprising of July 25.

The four men, who were accused of taking part in the raid on the federal chancellery in which Chancellor Dollfuss was killed, went to their deaths unflatteringly and silently.

They were Franz Leeb, Joseph Haxel, Ludwig Mietzen and Erich Wohlrab.

Campaign Ahead



Mrs. William Langer, former New York society girl who became the republican nominee for the governorship of North Dakota after her husband was ousted from the job, is preparing to campaign for the fall election.

Sardine Creek

SARDINE CREEK, Aug. 14.—(Sp.) Mrs. Nina Dusenberry and family, Wm. Wright and family, Ralph Dusenberry, Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Householder and Mr. and Mrs. Burk, visited Crater Lake last Sunday.

Mrs. Earl Croft and daughters, Nina and Sylvia, Mrs. Wm. Campbell and son Mark spent last week camping at the Dead Indian soda springs.

The Dugan threshing machine from Sams Valley threshed for E. C. Fiene last Wednesday.

Ralph Dusenberry, Charles and Harold Smith are picking pears at the Del Rio orchards, and Dora Smith is employed in the packing house.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Householder and Mr. and Mrs. Burk, who have been visiting with Mrs. Nina Dusenberry and other relatives in the valley for

the past three weeks, left for their homes in Los Angeles Thursday.

Mrs. Ethel Smith is visiting relatives in Grants Pass this week.

Mrs. J. U. Smith called on her sister, Mrs. Alice Cook, in Gold Hill Thursday evening, and reports her as slowly recovering from her recent illness.

Mrs. Wm. Wright and children, Mrs. Nina Dusenberry, daughter, Mabel

THE MINUTE THAT SEEMS A YEAR

Ralph Dusenberry, S. A. Dusenberry and son Arthur, were all Medford visitors Thursday.

Mrs. Lily Dusenberry writes they are located at the Hilton hopyard, north of Grants Pass, but hop picking did not begin until August 9. Also that their baby, Ida Pearl, is just recovering from the mumps.

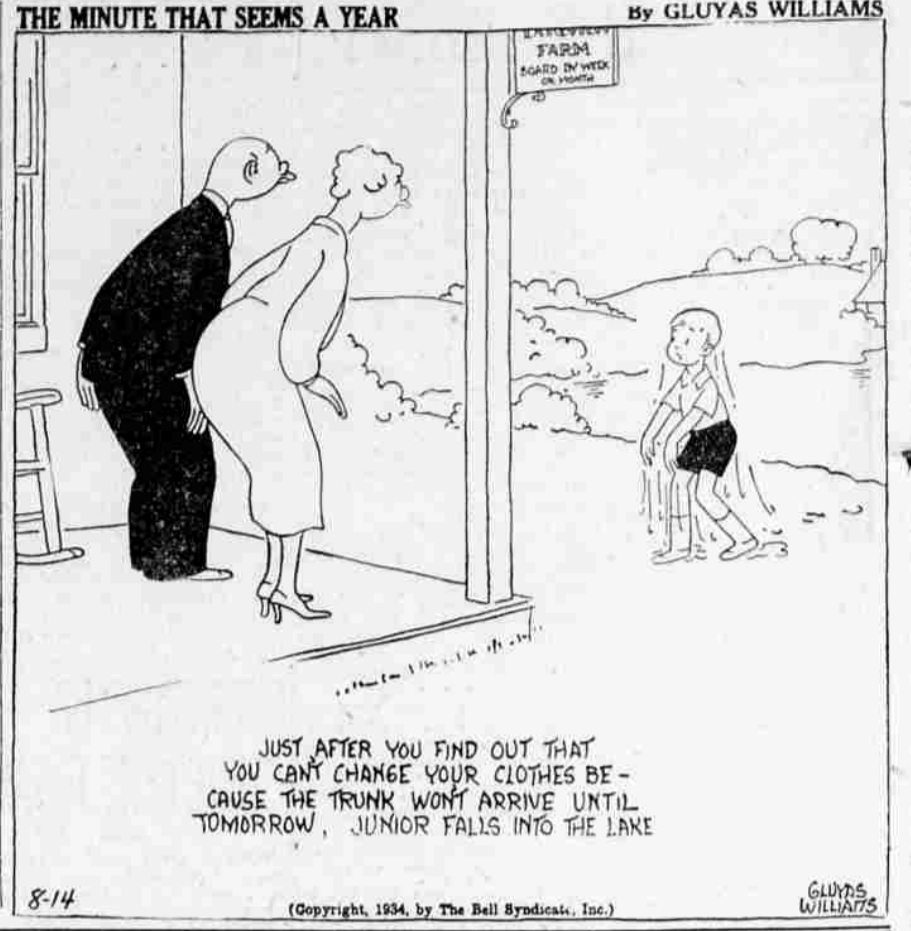
Mr. and Mrs. E. C. Fiene and Mr. and Mrs. P. L. Wait were among Medford visitors Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Simpson spent several days here last week visiting his mother, Mrs. E. C. Fiene.

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ring and daughter of Portland spent last week here, visiting his mother, Mrs. Ira Drake, sister, Mrs. Lily Durkee, and brother, George Ring. Richard is the youngest son of Mrs. Drake and was born and reared here, but has made his home in Portland for years, where he is employed by the Western Union Co.

Wendell Hopkins and Walter Hickman of Holly, Colo., arrived here Friday by motorcycle, for a short visit with the former's cousin, Mrs. Lulu Dusenberry and Mrs. Nora Wait, after spending Saturday visiting relatives in Ashland. They left for Eureka, Cal., to visit Hickman's sister, and then will take the southern route home.

Alfalfa Rates Lowered. WASHINGTON, Aug. 14.—(AP)—The interstate commerce commission today ruled in favor of the Idaho Grimm Alfalfa Seed Growers' association against the Aberdeen and Rock Fish Railroad company and others in the complaint which charged that carload rates on alfalfa, timothy and red and alkali clover seed from points in Idaho and Utah to Pacific coast destinations were unreasonable.



By GLUYAS WILLIAMS (Copyright, 1934, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

S'MATTER POP—



By C. M. Payne



By Hal Forrest



By EDWIN ALGER



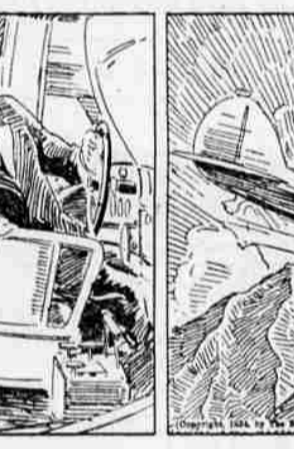
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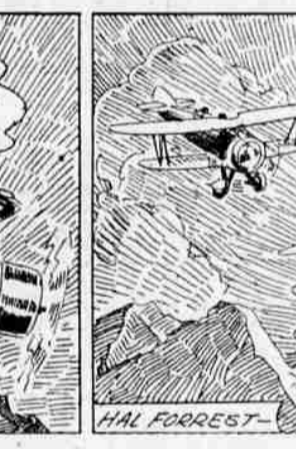
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By EDWIN ALGER



By Sol Hees



By Sol Hees



By Sol Hees



By George McManus



By George McManus

Prospect

PROSPECT, Aug. 14.—(Sp.)—Mrs. Lucy Bliss and son Arthur, of Klamath Falls, are house guests at the William Jantzer home this week. Mrs. Bliss and Mrs. Jantzer are sisters.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Hazard of Astoria spent August 3 at the Jantzer camp. Their son Virgil, who has been visiting for a week with Lewis Jantzer, returned home with them.

Mr. and Mrs. Geo. L. Jantzer and son Lewis, spent August 9 in Medford.

Nina Clarke underwent a major operation at the Community hospital in Medford Tuesday morning.

Emery Nye and Dorothy Shafer of Phoenix were married August 3.

Mrs. William Jantzer and sons and house guests, Mrs. Bliss and son, spent Wednesday in Grants Pass shopping and visiting relatives and friends.

Paul Robertson and two children

and Evelyn and Richard Ditsworth drove to Medford Saturday. The Ditsworth children remained to spend the weekend with relatives and were accompanied home Sunday afternoon by their father and Mrs. Urish Vaughn.

Mrs. W. T. Gilver spent August 3 and 8 in Medford.

Jeff Richy and Dwight Moore are spending several days in the huckleberry country.

Neva Mathews is helping Mrs. Paul Robertson with her housework.

Mr. and Mrs. A. T. Haines and Mrs. Haines' sister, who is her house guest, spent several days this week on a camping trip in the Klamath country.

Margery Collingwood is helping Mrs. A. T. Haines with her housework this summer.

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