

THE WORLD WITH A FENCE

A New Novel by Marian Sims

Chapter 44 DOCTOR'S HELP

BLAKE entered the office on Saturday morning like a man who walks in his sleep. There was a quick lifting of heads as he entered the room; a wave of sympathy beat against him, and almost submerged him. If they knew, he thought, they'd despise me instead. . . . He smiled slightly in response to the welcome and let his eyes move swiftly from one face to the other.

The sight of Carol's face almost broke him. He went to his office and sat with his head in his hands, seeing her face and thinking, in spite of himself, of the last three days.

But—not even pity or remorse could temper his love for Carol. Instead of loving her less, he felt as if their joint knowledge and responsibility had bound them together forever, and his hunger for her was intolerable.

But he could not force himself upon her yet; the memory of her horror was too fresh. He had the feeling that the very sight of him was unendurable to her, and his heart was racked by the thought of her, chained to her desk like a still, trapped animal.

On a sudden impulse he turned to the telephone and called Dr. Freeman.

"This is Blake Thornton," he said abruptly. "I wonder if I might talk to you a few minutes?"

"Yes, indeed," Dr. Freeman said promptly. "If you hadn't called me I intended to call you in a day or two."

"What time would suit you?"

There was an interval during which Dr. Freeman consulted his appointment book.

"How soon could you get here?" "In ten or fifteen minutes."

"Good. I'll see you then. I'm operating at eleven."

Blake, wondering, sitting in the luxurious waiting-room, what sort of man Freeman was, and how much he could expect in the way of understanding. He rose eagerly at the nurse's summons, and entered an immaculate consulting room.

Dr. Freeman shook hands, and Blake liked the firmness and sureness of his grasp. He was a big blond man, with beautifully kept hands and a soothing manner that might hide a great deal of force.

"Sit down," he said gravely. "That was a tragic business."

Blake looked squarely into his eyes. "A lot more tragic than you know. That's what I wanted to talk about."

Freeman nodded and leaned back in his chair. "I know, of course, that there was something back of it. Her type usually clings to the last shred of life, no matter how much unhappiness it holds."

Freeman's quiet tone gave him hope. He said bluntly:

"I had just filed suit for divorce; I managed to keep that out of the papers. I went down a week ago to ask her to divorce me."

DR. FREEMAN nodded. He could guess at a great deal more. He said unexpectedly:

"You're to blame, but not in the way you think. Your fault goes back a great many years."

Blake said defensively: "You mean in marrying her at all?"

"No. That needn't have been disastrous. Your mistake was in humoring her; in not demanding more of her."

Blake's mouth was thin. "I'm sorry. I wasn't cut out for a tyrant."

"Oh, my God!" Freeman groaned. "There's a middle ground. And besides, a woman of her type needs a tyrant; she should have married a Frenchman—or a Spaniard. American husbands ruin her sort."

The interview, Blake felt, was becoming incredibly cold-blooded. They were dissecting Irma like a pair of medical students. And then reason overrode his reluctance. Wasn't this what he wanted; wasn't he fighting for his life?

Freeman went on, very gravely. "I can guess, of course, what you must be going through, and I'd like to help you. Your responsibility for the tragedy is not nearly so direct as you think. It lies mainly—you'll forgive me, I hope—in your wife's own character. As you probably know, she was at a time of life which sometimes does strange things to women—particularly where there is a tendency to neurosis. Their viewpoint becomes distorted, and they exaggerate every misfortune. A spoiled child who has been disciplined sometimes resorts to the same desperate means."

Blake's anger faded and he felt a quick lifting of a hand that might pull him from the depths in which he struggled. He said quietly:

"Thank you very much. I'll try to remember that."

Dr. Freeman was looking at his beautiful hands. "How does—the other girl feel?"

Blake's hard-won composure was threatened. "She's—stunned. I'm afraid she never wants to see me again."

"Do you think she loves you?"

"I think so." He remembered her parting words: "I'll be with you every minute—if that helps any." He said in a surer voice: "I know she does."

"Then hold on to her, in spite of everything. Don't give in this time. If you want me to talk to her, I will."

The offer was generous, but he doubted if Carol would accept it. He said: "Thank you a thousand times. If I fail I may ask you to help." But he could not imagine forcing or influencing her decision: Carol was not like Irma.

ON SUNDAY morning Cornelia telephoned Carol.

"Can't you come out for dinner tonight? Mother and Dad are in New York and I want to make whoopee. I'll run over and get you about seven."

Carol's heart stopped for a second, because she suspected Cornelia's intention. But when they entered Cornelia's beautiful living-room Carol saw that the room was empty. They had cocktails, and sat down to a table that was laid for two. She felt relieved, like a criminal who, knowing his execution to be inevitable, has been granted a brief reprieve.

When dinner was over Cornelia rose.

"Let's have coffee in the den. Go on in while I speak to James."

Carol's breath caught. I can't! she almost screamed, and instead turned silently away.

There was a log fire in the den, and Blake sat on a couch before the fire, smoking. He sprang up as the door opened and they stood motionless, looking at each other. She closed the door mechanically. He said awkwardly:

"Cornelia was good enough to ask me to come. I hope you don't mind."

She forced herself to speak steadily: "No. We had to see each other and talk it out." She smiled a little. "We always seem to be talking something out, don't we?"

She did not dare sit beside him on the couch, so she took a big chair that half faced the fireplace. He offered her a cigarette and she accepted it automatically, and noticed that his hands were shaking as he held the match for her.

"I've been anxious about you. Are you—all right?"

"Yes. . . . Are you?"

"I suppose so. I wanted to tell you—not to worry for a while if you didn't feel like it."

Emotion distorted her face for the first time. "I didn't think I had any choice. Unless of course you'd rather I wouldn't."

His voice broke. "Oh, Carol! Don't you know I want you there—even if I can't say a word to you? Just knowing you're in the next room helps me to get through a day."

She looked at the fire. "I wonder if it does? I wonder if it wouldn't be better for me to go away—for good."

"Do you want to?" he asked finally.

"I—don't know. I suppose the courageous thing to do is to stay—if I can stand it."

He felt a quick anger against her because she seemed to misunderstand and to fall him so completely.

"For God's sake don't make me feel like a jailer! If you want to go you know I won't try to stop you."

The flare of anger burned out, and the longing that succeeded it broke down his restraint.

"Please sit by me," he said gently. "I won't touch you unless you want me to."

He told her what Dr. Freeman had said, and watched her anxiously for a sign of relaxing tension.

"He said—he'd be glad to talk to you if you cared to," he concluded.

"No. I think I know already what he'd say."

"And—that doesn't make you feel any better?"

Tears burned her eyes suddenly.

"It ought to. After a while maybe it will. It's too—fresh—right now."

He got up and stood on the hearth facing her. "Carol—aren't you being what you've always despised: a sentimentalist? You're the most honest person I've ever known: think."

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Monday, Carol and Blake arrive at a decision.

Washington CCC Sent To Bandon

BELLINGHAM, Oct. 2—(AP)—On request of the regional office at Portland, Supervisor Thomas Burgess of the Mount Baker national forest arranged for 100 men from the CCC camp at Glacier, Whatcom county, to leave for Coquille, Ore., late last night to fight fire. They left in three buses followed by five trucks of supplies and equipment. Fifty CCC men from the Barington camp were sent Sunday.

Plan Debt Free County

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Athletic Director Of Illinois, Dies

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Huff, one of the pioneers in the development of western conference athletics, was operated for a stomach ailment Saturday.

He insisted on the strictest adherence to conference and amateur rules, and was an unyielding foe of wagering on football games.

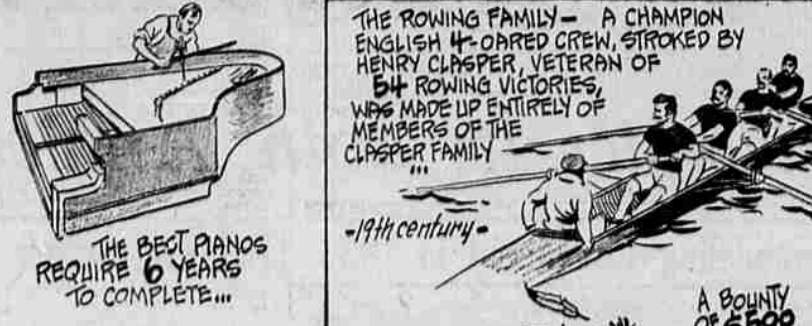
New X-Ray Better

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Closing time for Two Late to Classify Ads is 1:30 p. m.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



MAKE A HIT! SHE'LL ENJOY WRIGLEY'S LASTING FLAVOR

WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT THE PERFECT GUM

STEADIES THE NERVES

Perpetrator of perhaps the most daring swindle of all time, Mme. Humbert inaugurated the astounding scheme with the aid of her husband. One day in 1882 she announced that Robert Henry Crawford, an American millionaire, had left his entire fortune of \$20,000,000 to her. According to subsequent wills, the securities and bonds were to be kept in the possession of Mme. Humbert until her younger sister, Marie Raurnigac, became of age, when the fortune would be distributed between Marie and two of Crawford's nephews. On the basis of this totally fictitious story, Mme. Humbert had authorities place a seal on her safe, supposedly containing the fortune in bonds and securities.

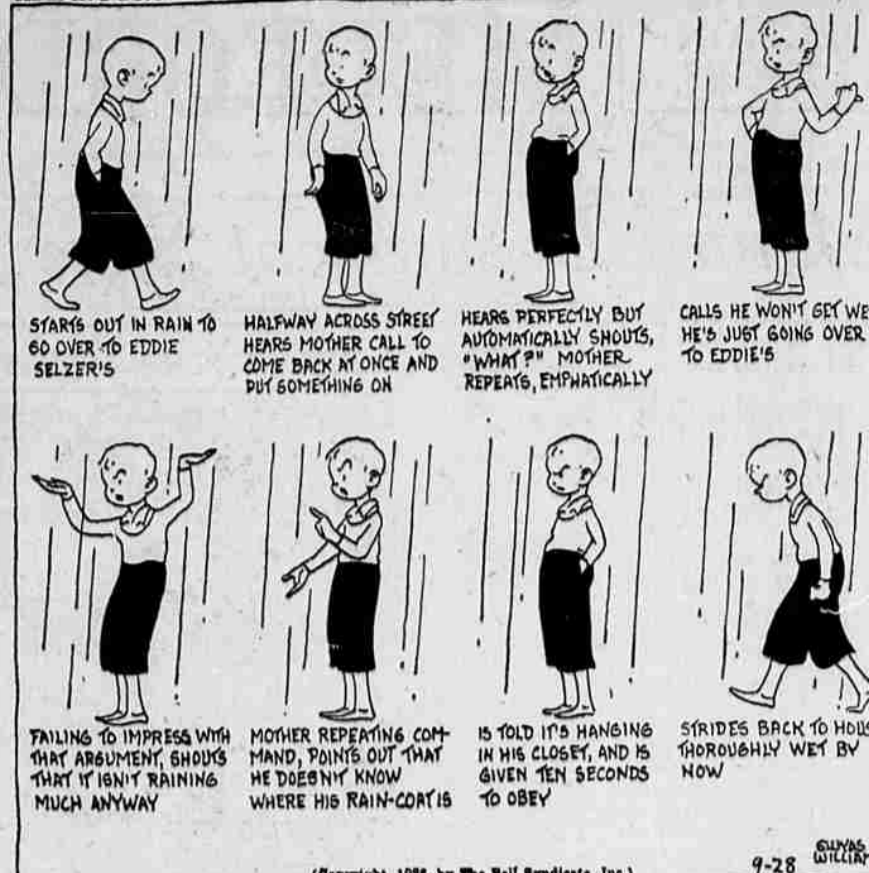
Strange as it seems, the daring adventures borrowed a total of \$140,000,000 on the strength of her story over a period of 20 years. Finally, in 1902, after being put off again and again by the Humberts, panic-stricken creditors demanded to have the safe opened.

Realizing their giant hoax would soon be discovered, the couple fled to Spain. With the safe opened by authorities and found to be empty.

Victorious in many of England's great rowing classics, an entire four-oared crew, including the coxswain, consisted of members of the Clasper family.

Henry Clasper, most famous of the family, pulled stroke oar on a championship Thames river crew for six years. In 1859, at the age of 47, he had rowed stroke in 73 races, 54 of them victories.

KEEPING DRY By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



B'MATTER POP—By O. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Department Investigates



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—A Hunch



THE NEBBS—Drive Safely



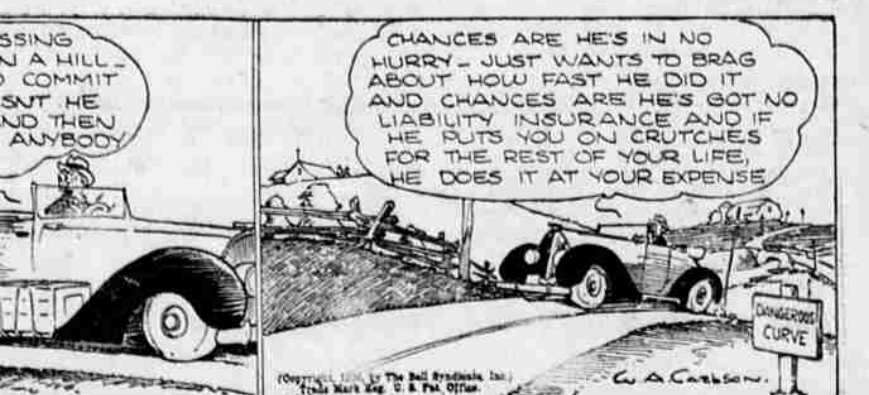
By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HESS



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