The Boxwood Barrier

By BLANCHE SMITH FERGUSON

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The Story So Far: *Heartbroken because the man she loves has left her, Judith Goodloe decides to marry Reuben Oliver. This man, who has pulled himself up by his bootstraps, has one thing the aristocratic Goodloes need—money. Desperately in love with Judith, Reuben refuses to heed the warning of his partner, Clem Rogers that unless he leaves the Maryland valley and gets back into the fight he is due for a financial licking.*

Chapter 16

'A Man With Spunk'

IN RESENTFUL surliness Reuben's hands tightened on the wheel. After all the years—lean years and fat—Clem was letting him down! Incredible! Out of all the world Clem was the one person whom he believed he could count on. Now—

Surely Clem understood that a man must select his own wife. Must choose his own path—And again like a gong tolling faintly and from afar he heard Judith saying: "If I had to leave this valley—"

And he had dreamed of marrying another Biblical Ruth! "Whither thou goest—"

Clem, making a ceremony of cleaning and putting away his pipe, glanced surreptitiously at the lean, serious face of the younger man, with rebellion and frustration in his eyes. What good was money? "The only thing in the whole wide world that Cissy wants and I can't buy him or bribe him!"

Grim satisfaction in that thought in spite of a rising anger. If he could buy or bribe Reuben, he wouldn't want him for Cissy. Well, let the young ass go ahead! Let him go the limit! then when he came crawling back—

In stubborn mood Clem and Reuben arrived at the gates of Goodloe's Choice, just as Judith, mounted on Winona, came out. The temperamental animal pretended to be afraid of the shining automobile. She staged a grand act. She danced and pranced all over the road. She reared on her hind legs. She pawed with her front feet. She dilated her thin nostrils.

Judith let her go through all her stunts. She even encouraged her a little. She gave a fine exhibition of horsemanship. Reuben watched fearfully. Clem with delighted fascination.

"Whoops, whoops and a couple of hooplas!" he exclaimed when Winona at last drew quite close to the machine she had pretended to fear, "That's the best act I've ever seen outside of a circus. Don't know as I've ever seen a better in one. You're Rube's girl, I take it?"

Judith still busy with Winona's bridle nodded her assent.

"Well, by cracky if you're going to manage your husband like you do your horse Rube's going to need sympathy."

Judith laughed gayly: "Sh-h-sh!" deliciously confidential, "Let's keep him thinking he has all the luck."

"Maybe he has at that."

'Isn't It Appalling?'

"THIS is Clem Rogers, Judith," Reuben made a belated introduction, "The man who gave me my start."

"But who won't be in at the finish," Clem thought dourly. He said: "Pleased to meet you, ma'am."

Judith leaned from her saddle to take Clem's hand.

"You've been a good friend."

She smiled her own peculiarly friendly smile. "The very best friend Reuben ever had."

Clem fell before her charm almost without a struggle. "I was afraid Rube was being hooked by a cold-blooded dame," he confessed sheepishly.

"You don't know the half of it, Mr. Rogers."

"Neither do you, ma'am," Clem chuckled.

"He means," Reuben explained quickly, not knowing what Clem would say next. "that I'm poorer than I was yesterday."

"And he'll be poorer tomorrow," Clem further enlightened Judith watching her as a cat does a mouse "and poorer still the day after that."

Deep in the role she had set herself to play, Judith said with just the right shade of concern: "Isn't it appalling the way money is made and lost?"

"You said it, ma'am. It's harder to make than to lose these days."

"I'm sure of it."

"It doesn't frighten you?"

"No. I've been poor all my life I'm afraid I wouldn't know how to act natural under any other circumstances." Her eyes were honest. Her confidence disarming "Come on in and meet Gran." She turned back to the gates.

Gran, in her most gracious mood talked with Clem about prospecting oil, wheat and whatnot while Reuben had a fragrant goodby kiss from Judith.

"Don't worry, sweet."

Laughter rippled over Judith's red lips—"You don't know the Goodloes if you think they worry."

Like Buzzards

JUDITH thought old Clem rather a dear. He told her how Reuben had looked on the day he helped to reload the cabbage. "Cold and thin as a starved rat. with freckles all over his face and no shoes on his feet."

She glanced at Reuben, sartorially perfect, talking with Jim, and felt the inexplicable pity she so often felt when she looked at him This old Clem knew they were all cheating Reuben—preying on him like buzzards—

"He's a fighter, ma'am," Clem bragged. "He wasn't beat that day and I've never seen him beat since."

"I believe you."

"And I'm never gonna see him beat unless." Clem turned keen green eyes, not unlike his daughter's eyes, full upon her, "he runs afoul of something he can't hit back at."

"Y-yes." But she did not quite see. She only knew that Cissy's father was appraising her. That he was afraid she was the somebody who would rob Rube of his power to fight. Of his power to—win.

"You're getting a man with spunk, ma'am, and honesty. Can you match those traits?"

Her blue eyes did not waver. "I think so," proudly. "What do you think?"

"I'm not thinking. I'm hoping everything is going to turn out swell and I wish you luck."

"Thank you." Judith made a quick decision: "I'm asking Cissy to be maid of honor."

"W-well now—Cissy will be tickled to death."

But Clem was more tickled than Cissy would be. He didn't give a hoot for place and honor for himself but he wanted his girl to strut with the best. He left Goodloe's Choice well pleased and secretly a bit overwhelmed.

"Not that I ain't seen grander places," he confided to Rube. "But when it comes to class—tone—Boy, I reckon you're marrying it!"

Reuben, his hands tense upon the wheel, his eyes upon the road, his thoughts roaming far, did not answer.

Clem, craning his neck for a last look at gardens, meadows, hedges, said: "There's nearly a half a million dollar lay-out here. Gosh—unless there's a miracle you're gonna have a heck of a time living up to it!—"

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Monday: The wedding march.

TO RESTORE CANAL FOR VACATIONISTS

WASHINGTON—(AP)—Trains now haul the coal and lumber that was once carried from the west, through Cumberland gap in the Alleghanies, to the Atlantic on the Chesapeake and Ohio canal.

But the 186-mile canal is being taken over by the interior department, which will turn it into a vacation land to haul the canoes of vacationists. The 22 miles running out of Washington will be restored to revive the picture of how our forebears traveled and shipped their merchandise before the Civil war.

There are locks, aqueducts and old toll houses along the canal which are still sound and which will be restored in the future.

The canal was built in 1828 and remained in commercial use until 1924. At its peak, around 1870, it hauled as much as a million tons of coal each year from the mountain coal fields to the eastern seaboard.

BLINDNESS NO BAR TO GAME OF GOLF

LOS ANGELES—(AP)—The Rev. Mr. Walter D. Kallenach is totally blind, but that doesn't keep him from an occasional game of golf.

"Someone tinkles a tin cup and I know just about where the cup is and how hard to play the ball," he explains. "I also play horseshoes. Someone hits the peg for me and I throw toward the sound. I often get a ringer."

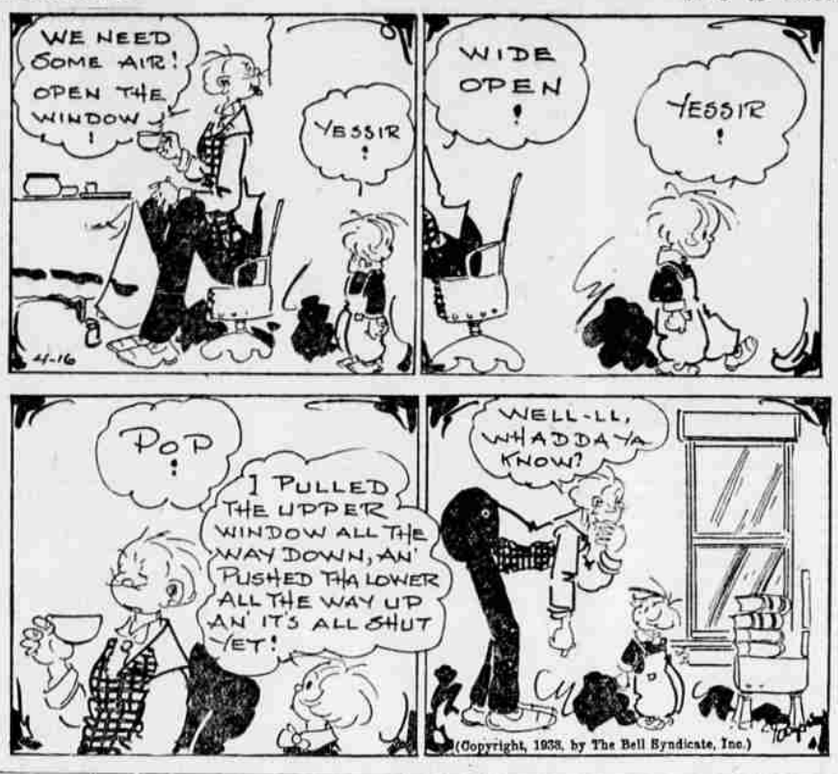
Village Under Water

MILWAUKEE, Wis.—(AP)—Max Nohl, Milwaukee diver, found a huge stone structure 36 feet beneath the surface of Lake Mills, Wis. Scientists believe this is part of a flooded Indian village of a type heretofore unknown.

Arctic Gives Peace

WINNIPEG, Man.—(AP)—Life in the arctic brings peace and solitude, along with the daily hardships, says the Most Rev. Armand Iabaut, O. M. I., first bishop co-adjutor of the vicarite of Hudson bay, largest and most northerly Catholic mission in the world.

S'MATTER POP By C M PAYNE



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