Married Flirts

by MABEL McELLIOTT

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BEGIN HERE TODAY

GYPSY MORELL and TOM WEAVER are married on the same day as LILA HOTALING and DEREK BLISS, but Lila expects to live in luxury while Gypsy keeps her job teaching in a settlement school.

Gypsy has to struggle to keep expenses within Tom's income. Another problem is Tom's jealousy of wealthy MARKO BROUGHTON who once asked Gypsy to marry him and whom they meet at the Bilisses' home.

When the doctor tells Gypsy she is to have a baby she gives up her job. Summer comes on and is intensely hot. Gypsy and Tom move to a cottage on Long Island owned by a friend.

Lila makes an unexpected call at the cottage. She seems restless and discontented and for the first time Gypsy is sorry for her instead of envying her.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXI

THE summer waned all too swiftly. Blue days, golden days there were in August, when Gypsy flung her arms aloft for sheer joy in living; when there was not a cloud in the sky; when the borders blazed with phlox and larkspur and zinnias; when the nights were drenched with dew and you wakened to cool, scented, blowy mornings.

There never was such a summer. The Morells came over from Blue Hills in the shabby car and there were picnics on the grass under the laden apple trees. Steaks were broiled over the crude outdoor oven. Tom rushed home early, exulting in the luxury of his own vine and fig tree, and there were two wonderful weeks when he was home altogether.

The corn ripened under the sun along the highways. The fruit hung heavy on the trees. Hay was stacked in golden tents in the fields. And on one gorgeous day in late September Gypsy's child was born. She had been rushed to the city hospital the night before. For 10 long hours she had writhed in pain, digging her nails into her flesh, trying to stifle the cries that were wrung from her. At 8 o'clock the baby's wail sounded and the watching young husband, pacing the corridor outside, sagged against the distempered walls in an agony of relief.

"It's over, it's over," he whispered. When they allowed him in to see her an hour later she was lying white and seemingly broken in the narrow bed. Only her eyes were alive, moving alertly in her tanned young face.

"Tommy . . . oh, darling!" Tears of weakness ran down her cheeks and his own eyes watered in sympathy.

"Was it so terrible, dearest?" He had her hands in his. His eyes were roving anxiously over her dear, familiar features.

She shut her eyes, on a long sigh. "Let you see the baby?"

"Not yet, honey. The nurse said . . ."

A figure in striped and crackling cambric glided in. "Time's up, Mr. Weaver. This young lady must get some sleep." And he had to go, after a kiss and a whispered admonition.

"She's all right. She's perfectly fine," the doctor told him. "She came through splendidly." But Tom was not convinced. His office mates railed him robustly on his grimness. "As if they knew what it was all about," the poor fellow thought witheringly, wincing to think of the long night and Gypsy's smothered cries. But afterward, when they brought the child to him that evening, and he gazed upon him—his own son—his spirits mounted. It was going to be all right—it was going to be all right! He and Gypsy and the little fellow! Why, that was an unbeatable combination.

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"ISN'T he the darlingest . . . ?"

It was a week later and the baby, a bundle of pink blanket and muslin, with only the top of a rosy head showing, lay on Gypsy's arm. Her curls were freshly brushed, her eyes had the peculiar deep, lambent glow that comes to young mothers just out of the shadowy valley. Tom had eyes only for her.

"Isn't he the sweetest, most adorable . . . ? Tom Weaver, you're not paying attention to your son! You're not listening to a word I say."

He grinned at her. "He's a wonder. But honestly, Gyps, do you think he's much to look at right now? I was admiring you. Do you mind?"

"Silly!" She pretended to be annoyed, ignoring the flattery. "He's the most beautiful thing God ever made! Aren't you, precious? Aren't you the most beeyootiful thing God ever made? Look at his little hands, Tommy. Marvelous!"

"Your mother says he's like the Glynns," said Tom slyly. "But I say he's the living image of my Great Uncle Tobias."

Gypsy looked up quickly, to say with pride, "Why, Tommy, he looks like no one else in the world but you. How could anyone say he looks like Uncle Tobias! Dreadful fat old man!"

Tom roared, delighted at the way she had risen to the bait. Of course David Morell Weaver was the very image of his father! Of course he was handsome!

"You're the most extraordinary girl," Tom murmured. "Last year you were just a kid, dancing, playing around. And now you're a full-fledged parent, bristles and everything."

"You stop teasing me," Gypsy told him with dignity. "I am now a full-time mother, with no sense of humor where my child is concerned."

The McKinnons had returned from Minnesota during the early part of Gypsy's hospital sojourn, so it was to the apartment instead of to the little house that the young Weavers brought David Morell.

They arrived there one brisk October morning, squired by a slow, plump, talkative individual who had been recommended by Doctor McGuire as a practical nurse. And immediately the tempo of life changed. The hospital had been dull—Gypsy had looked forward to coming home—but at least the routine had been precise and orderly. The baby had gone back to his nursery after every feeding and the young mother had known nothing of the routine of baths, diapers and airings.

Now everything was different. Mrs. Burby was inefficient though amiable. Gypsy's own room was a welter of powder cans, safety pins, folded small garments and a bassinette which seemed to overshadow everything else. The kitchen was never tidy. There was always a boiling container on the stove. There were potatoes, half of them peeled, in the sink. There were rags, towels, soiled dishes everywhere.

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AT the end of the second week of this, Gypsy's patience broke. She said desperately, "I can't stand it any longer, Tom. You'll have to go down to an agency and get a maid. I'm strong enough to bath baby myself now. We'll let her go in the morning."

But she looked about her in despair the morning of Mrs. Burby's departure.

"I don't know where to begin," she said wearily. The living room was dusty, the chairs were all in the wrong places, pictures were awry. There were half dead flowers in the blue vase. The kitchen was piled high with soiled clothes, week-old newspapers. There were crumbs on stove and sink. The coffee pot, with a scruff of grounds on spout and lid, stood on the window sill.

It was the first morning Gypsy had got out of bed before breakfast, under doctor's orders. Now she donned one of her old summer prints and, having assured herself that the baby was warm and wasn't in a draft, she attacked the kitchen.

Wasn't Tom coming back? Would she have to battle with this disorder all day? She began to regret having let Mrs. Burby go, as wave after wave of weakness swept over her. But her spirit was valiant. She filled the dishpan with warm soapy water and stubbornly attacked the discouraging task. She had stacked the cups and saucers in the drainer and was beginning to experience the fine flavor of encouragement when she heard a thin reedy wail.

She hurried to the baby. "What is it? What does he want, the darling?"

Oh, what an idiot she was! He was used to his bath at precisely this hour. Mrs. Burby had impressed on her the importance of doing the same thing at the same time for David. And she had been forgetting.

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SHE was not, really, strong enough, but it seemed worth both labor and exhaustion to be rid of the dawdling, never-silent, complaining Mrs. Burby. The first day Gypsy was carried through by sheer force of will and nervous energy. Tom tried agency after agency, but there seemed no one anxious to do cooking and general housework in a family with a brand new baby. At the end of 24 hours young Mrs. Weaver found herself almost regretting the departure of her erstwhile assistant. Her back ached and her feet were on fire. There was everything still to do. Beds were only half made, dinner half prepared. How did young mothers manage without assistance, Gypsy wondered. Was it possible that only a month and a half ago she had been strong, rested, that she had thought housework and cooking amusing?

She was too tired to eat. Tom watched her anxiously as she lay, quite exhausted, on the day bed.

"This can't go on," he said. "I'll bring someone in, first thing in the morning, if I have to sandbag her." And now the baby was crying. He had to be changed, fed; his bed had to be made fresh. There were piles of small garments waiting to be washed.

"It's endless," Gypsy wailed on a long sigh, collapsing into bed. Tom patted her shoulder, his young face creased by a frown of worry and bewilderment. Later, as she dozed off, she could hear him clattering inexpertly in the kitchen, disposing of the dishes.

Next morning she dragged herself out, only half rested. Young David had awakened in the night, of course, for his feeding. A baby's demands were inexorable. Tom scrambled together his own hasty breakfast and Gypsy drank a cup of coffee lifelessly, standing at the kitchen table. She must let everything go now, attend to the baby's bath first. What luxury, she thought longingly, it would be to sink down to sleep this moment; to sleep the clock around and waken refreshed, made new!

She went to gather him up, a rosy bundle of babyhood, a few moments later and even her tired eyes brightened at the sight of him.

(To Be Continued)

Flapper Fanny Says

Girls dashing for shelter often find colors run faster.

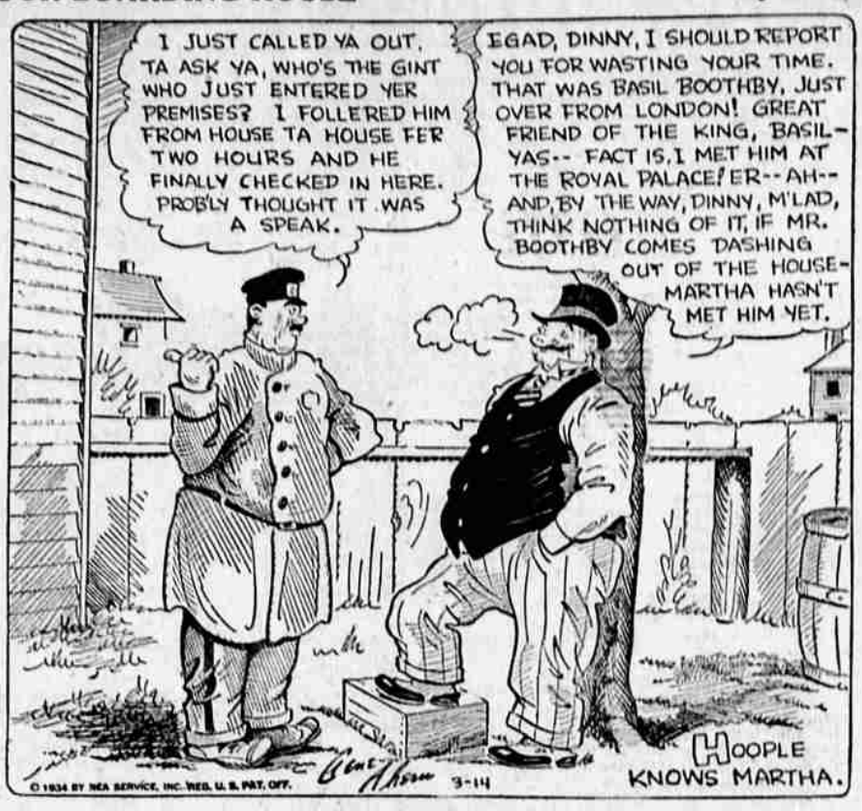
OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams

WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



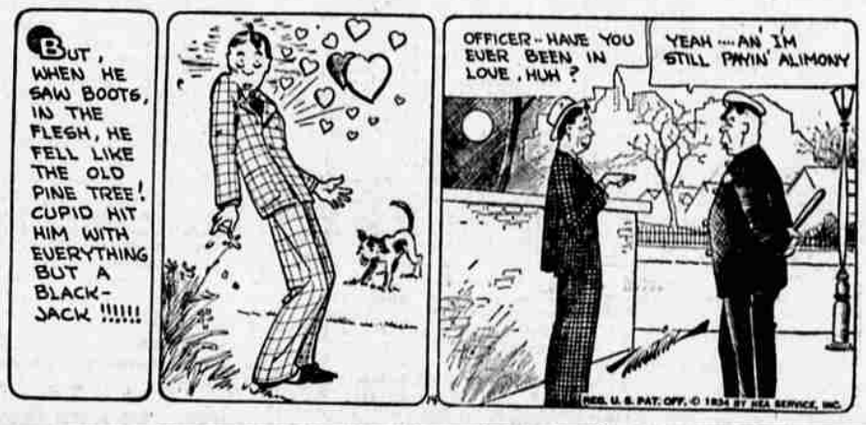
HOOPLE KNOWS MARTHA.

SALESMAN SAM

By Small

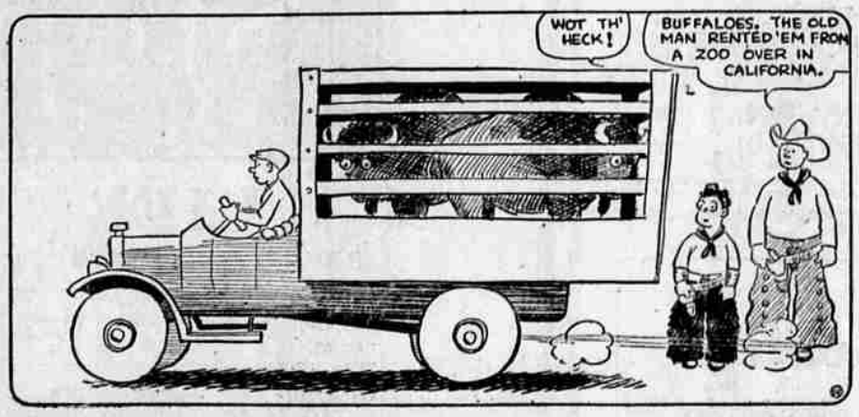
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



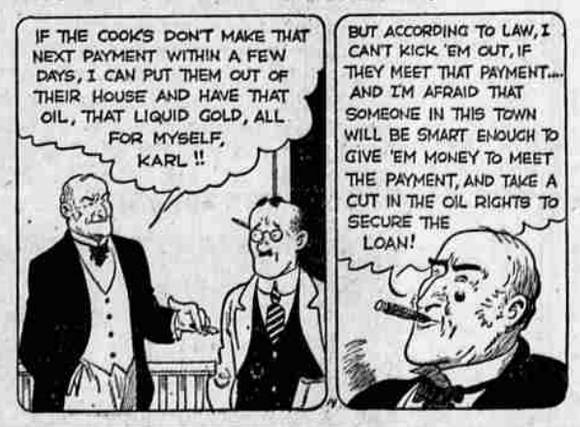
WASH TUBBS

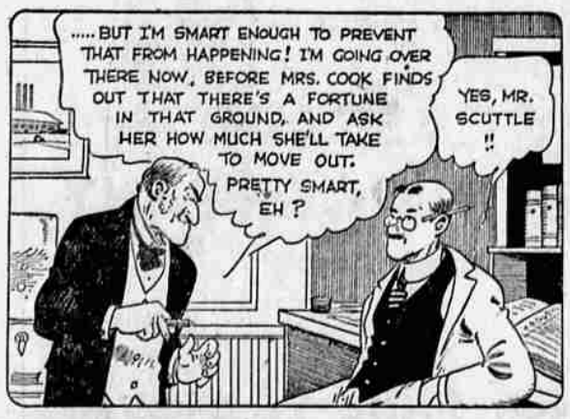
By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser





THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Cowan