● SERIAL STORY

Ticket to Hollywood

BY W. H. PEARS

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YESTERDAY: The afternoon of the broadcast, Mr. Weston disappears. When he does not return, Francie and Aunt Hat go on to the studio. Jerry Finney, acting as master of ceremonies, refuses to recognize Francie. Her father summons her from the stage. Gusty has been injured, possibly seriously, trying to be a stunt man. Mr. Weston has brought Gusty's wallet. Gusty wants Francie to have the ticket, has not discovered its loss. While Francie decides whether she will go to Gusty or remain to sing, her name is called. Once—twice—and "Last call, Miss Francie Weston!"

CHAPTER XII

FRANCIE turned, sobbing. "Take me to him, Pops. I want to go to Gusty."

John Weston took his daughter's hand, a look of relief breaking over his face. "Good girl, Francie," he murmured, and led her swiftly out of the studio into the warm California night.

Francie felt faint. She was vaguely conscious of the lights of Hollywood swirling by the car window, and then they were at the hospital.

As they approached Gusty's room, a gray-haired doctor met them. He said to Francie in low tones, "Are you 'Sugar'?" She nodded. "You can go right in. He's been calling for you."

Gusty was a white, still figure on the bed. His eyes were closed. His breathing came with an effort. Francie crossed to him softly. A cold weight pressed against her heart as she bent over him.

"Gusty," she said, then added in a whisper, "dear."

His lids came up slowly. His eyes lighted. Restless fingers groped for her hand. "Hullo Sugar," he said with an effort.

"Gusty! Oh, I'm so glad you know me. You're going to be all right. You're going to get well. Aren't you, dear?"

The shadow of a grin flickered across his set lips. Gusty said weakly, "Darn right, Sugar." Then he went to sleep.

Francie held his hand until the doctor came and motioned her outside. "Your boy friend has a very solid constitution," he smiled. "I wouldn't plan any funeral yet."

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FRANCIE and Gusty were sitting on the hotel veranda when Mr. Weston joined them.

He said, "Well, Gusty, I've finally settled matters. I've been talking with one of the studio executives. He admits they were at fault for not checking your qualifications more carefully before letting you smash that car."

"Are they going to pay Gusty?" Francie asked.

"Better than that," Mr. Weston replied. "They're standing all hospital expenses and giving Gusty $100 in cash. And if he wants it, he can have a job shoving props around. How does that sound, Gusty?"

"Swell!" After six days Gusty's grin was still wan. "I can sure use that money."

"And the job? It will put you in contact with some pretty important musicians. That's your ambition, isn't it? To play with some big outfit?"

"Well . . . yes, Mr. Weston, but see, I hocked my trumpet."

"You can easily unhock it." John Weston noticed his daughter's hand clasped in Gusty's, and his eyes smiled. "Well, it's up to you, son. At any rate, you're not broke."

He faded discreetly from the veranda. Gusty and Francie sat for a while in silence.

Francie said, "It—it's a grand opportunity, Gusty. Pops is right. You'd soon know everyone important, and before long you'd get a real break. Maybe doing music for pictures or something."

"Yeah," Gusty said, "I guess so."

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MORE silence. Hollywood sunshine lay warm and yellow about them. Long-bladed palms stirred in the breeze. The city stretched out white and clean and glamorous against its backdrop of hills.

"Pretty here, isn't it?" Gusty said.

Francie's heart ached solidly. Gusty liked it. He was going to stay. Some day she would read in the Elspeth City Bugle about how he had signed a big movie contract . . .

"Yes," she said tonelessly, "it's pretty."

"Prettier than Elspeth City?" he probed.

"I—I guess so."

Gusty sighed. "Well, I suppose if this is where you want to live I'd better take the job."

"Me?" Francie said. "I—I don't understand, Gusty."

"Well, holy smokes, do I have to draw you a diagram? Look, Francie, what happened when I got banged up? I started yelling for you and wanting you to have the ticket. What did you do? Why, you tossed away your big chance to come to the hospital."

Francie said, "Gusty, you mean . . ."

"Well, it's darn funny, ain't it?"

"Yes. Yes, it is. It . . . it seems like each one of us was thinking of the other instead of ourselves."

Gusty nodded. "We're pretty young, of course, but if you want me to stay in Hollywood I could send for you some day."

"Gusty, do you want to stay here?"

"Do you?"

Francie frowned. "Everything's sort of changed, Gusty. I'm not sure I even want to be a singer except just for fun. Like with Duke Meyers or someone."

Gusty's hand tightened around hers. "Well, heck, why didn't you say so, Francie? Because I . . . I feel like that too. 'Course, I want to go on playing my old hot trumpet and maybe work out new licks and play with Duke. But fixing autos is a good business. It's solid. If you're good you can always make enough to—well, run a home."

"Oh, Gusty."

• • •

HE straightened. "Say, know what night it is, Francie? It's Friday. I'll bet Maw's got a raft of new records. Wouldn't mind sitting in on the old jam session right now."

"Gee, it'd be swell, Gusty," Francie said. "Maybe Pops was right after all. He said the happiest girls stay in their Elspeth Cities and marry their Gu—" She broke off, cheeks crimson.

"Marry their who?"

"He said . . . their Gusty Gairs."

"Well, why not?" Gusty said fiercely. "I guess if we want to do things that way it's our business. Maybe we're just getting a little sense. In a year or so, maybe—"

Francie fumbled in her bag. "I've still got your wallet, Gusty, and your little trumpet pin. I found it the night Blubber robbed you. I was afraid you might lose it."

"Well, I'll be!" Gusty fingered his beloved pin. "Am I glad to have it back!"

Francie said, "The ticket's still in there, Gusty."

He pulled it out, examined it. Francie watched him with clear, unafraid eyes. Even Pops had agreed it was better for Gusty never to know she'd taken it.

Gusty said softly, "I—I'd like you to keep the pin, Francie."

"Gusty, not really?"

"Yes," he said gravely, fumbling as he pinned it on her blouse. "It sort of makes all the things we've planned seem kind of near and real."

Then he bent and kissed her. It was not a movie kiss. It had no glamor. It was just a plain, ordinary kiss, but it filled Francie's eyes with ecstatic tears and made her happier than all the expert kisses Jerry Finney had given her.

Snuggling close to him, Francie said, "Gusty, let's frame this old thing and hang it in the living room of our house back in Elspeth City."

(THE END)

Wartime Romance

Mary Marvin Breckenridge, above, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Cabell Breckenridge, of York Village, Me., who was recently married in Berlin to Jefferson Patterson, of Dayton, Ohio, First Secretary of the U. S. Embassy at Berlin.

THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson

ANSWER: Wrong. It is a horse entered in a race but withdrawn before the race is run.

NEXT: "Fingers that are all thumbs."

IN SEARCH OF YOUTH

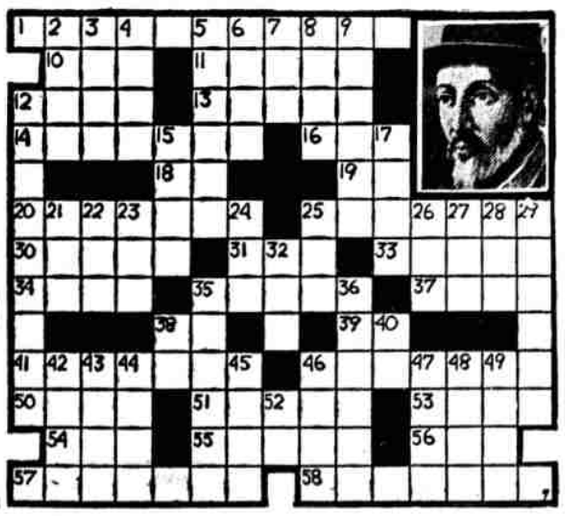
HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured explorer of America.
10 Garden vegetable.
11 Perfect type.
12 Fruit.
13 Sugar sand.
14 Beginner.
16 To sink.
18 You and I.
19 Toward.
20 To occur first.
25 Not at war with either side.
30 The east wind
31 Ye.
33 Coronet.
34 Tepee.
35 Reddish dye.
37 Brief time.
38 Myself.
39 Spain (abbr.).
41 Seeks to attain.
46 Flexible.
50 Booty.
51 Recipient.
53 Girl.
54 Rubber tree.
55 Exultant.
56 Before.
57 He discovered the State of —— on Easter Sunday.
58 He was —— by birth.

VERTICAL

2 To unclose.
3 Spruce.
4 Pool.
5 Dinged.
6 To prepare for publication.
7 To permit.
8 Organs of hearing.
9 Salt of oleic acid.
12 He sought the "Fountain of —— Youth."
15 Inspires reverence.
17 A clot.
21 To regret.
22 Sea eagle.
23 Slash.
24 Organ of sight
25 Convent dweller.
26 It is (contr.).
27 Knock.
28 Constellation.
29 He —— at St. Augustine
32 Single thing.
35 Took notice of.
36 Dormant.
38 Mister (abbr.)
40 3.1416.
42 Spirit.
43 Horseback game.
44 Highway.
45 Plant.
46 House cats.
47 To sanction.
48 African tribe
49 Falsehoods.
52 North America (abbr.).

Answer to Previous Puzzle



OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. WILLIAMS

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With MAJOR HOOPLE

RED RYDER

BY FRED HARMAN

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

BY HAROLD GRAY

WASH TUBBS

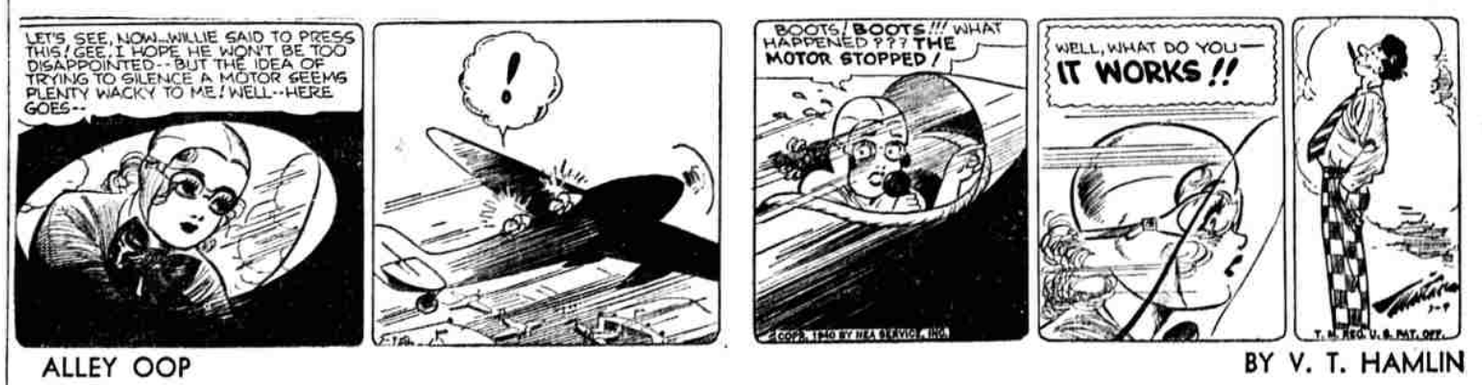
BY CRANE

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

BY BLOSSER

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

BY MARTIN



ALLEY OOP

BY V. T. HAMLIN