

Best-Dressed Woman

BY HELEN WELSHMER

CHAPTER XII

BASIL ROGERS, Marta's divorced husband, stood in the doorway of the sitting room where Judith, Marta, and Phil sat.

"Hello, my sweet," he greeted Marta. He leered. "So this—is the gentleman who's going to give you an honest million. Congratulations, my dear, congratulations! Didn't think you could do it! Better girl'n I thought you." He turned to Judith. "And you and I get jilted, eh? Don't you fret. She'll give him a devil's life—a devil's own life."

Phil was on his feet. "That's about enough out of you!" He grasped the man's arm, but Basil Rogers pushed him back.

"Going, going soon," he said. "Get out!" Phil commanded, but the man only laughed.

"Patience, please, patience. I've got to talk to this young lady—my wife she was. Might as well say it in front of you good people. She got rid of me—didn't want to stay in my racket—not good enough for her." His voice grew uglier. He addressed Marta directly. "But you took a string of pearls on your own, my dear! Pretty pearls, I saw them."

"You're lying," Marta said, but her face was as white as her hair. "I won't stand it."

Phil noticed it. He began to speak, then paused. "Kick him out," Marta ordered. Phil.

"LET'S hear him through," Phil answered. Judith saw Marta clench her hands and look towards the door. "I want to hear it." "You bet you want to hear it!" the man challenged. "The police got on my trail because my wife was at your house when the pearls went. I was innocent. Funny! I was innocent this time. But I had an idea. So I've been following Marta to find out. Saw her leave her house and come here. So followed." He held up a warning hand. "Didn't give you away to the cops, Marta. Not at all. Gentleman to the end. Just gave them your address. But be careful, Marta, be careful!" Judith spoke quietly. "How did the police happen to know I lost my pearls?"

"Yes—how?" Marta asked. "It was the jewel detectives from the insurance agency," Phil

told them. "I reported Judith's loss, quite naturally. I wanted to clear Marta completely and I also wanted to regain the pearls." The maid came in then to announce other callers. It was Basil Rogers who nodded to her. "Show 'em in, show 'em in. The detectives, Marta, my love. They talked to me a while ago and I thought it would be sort of nice for all of us to get together. So I told him to come along. Have a nice talk—get things settled—and you can marry this gentleman."

"Detectives? Here?" Phil asked.

THE next 10 minutes were a blur to Judith—a blur that would come back with clarity later. She knew that the detectives confronted Marta with evidence she couldn't withstand. She had sold the pearls, one here and one there, thinking she ran no danger. She admitted, sobbingly, that she had needed the money to maintain her apartment and wardrobe until she and Phil were married. She had been in constant fear that she would be discovered.

"I did it because I love you so," she pleaded with Phil. "I was going to redeem them—every pearl—as soon as I was married and had a bank account."

"I'll call you later, Judith," Phil said abruptly, and engineered the group into the outer hall and the elevator.

SHE went to the train alone next day because she did not wish to be surrounded by gaily, toasts for which she had no heart tonight. The creak of the wheels

begin, hastily and efficiently. The train was rushing down the station shed, now under the tunnel. It emerged and she saw the lights of the Jersey lowlands. Then the train had passed the Manhattan Transfer and was swinging towards Philadelphia on the first lap of its westward trek. A shadow filled the doorway. She supposed the conductor had come for tickets—no, she had turned them in at the station. The porter, with a message, perhaps. She glanced up. "Phil!" "May I come in, Judith?" he asked. "Yes, only—" She gestured to the passing landscape. "You can't get off!" "I don't want to get off!" Their eyes met, the clear blue and the shadowed gray. "Oh, Judy," Phil said, and somehow his long arms were around her and his lips were against her hair. She yielded to him, not asking explanations for a minute. He needed her. He wanted her. For the hour she would not question. When he let her go, he did not mention Marta. "Judith, that actor—Bruce Knight—does he matter?" he asked. Judith banished the smile from her lips. Her heart felt warm and alive. She hadn't realized how dead it was. It was like a man to mention his rival, not yours. If he could be afraid that he had lost her, he still cared.

"No," she answered. "He never mattered." He waited a second. Then he said: "Marta will be all right. I settled everything for her. Judy, I don't know what happened to me. I've known for a long time something was wrong with Marta—she got on my nerves. I loved her for a while, though—but I didn't like her." He was being honest. "I compared her with you. And then I thought you and Bruce Knight—" He hesitated. "I didn't know if you could care for me any more. I thought maybe you loved him. Besides, I wasn't free to win you back." "Judith, can you love me again?" Phil went on eagerly, almost pleading. She never had stopped loving him. She did not tell him so, though. It was better for him to feel that he was winning his way back.

"It won't be difficult, Phil, my dear," Judith answered. THEN she was aware of the rush of the train through the night. "We needn't go west," she said. "Now we can get off at Newark." His hands were holding hers firmly. "We're going on," he said. "Singapore, Rome, Bagdad. I hurried my Oriental trip and took a chance on two reservations all along the way. I thought you might come." He grinned boyishly at her astonishment. "Honey, we're off to see the world!"

A long time later, when the Quaker City was vanishing down the rails, he said: "How are you fixed for clothes? You'll need things, darling—" Judith's eyes smiled but her lips were grave. She remembered the boxes that were following her from New York. They mattered little now. She would wire to have them sent on to San Francisco, and she would choose only a few things for the trip, from among the collection.

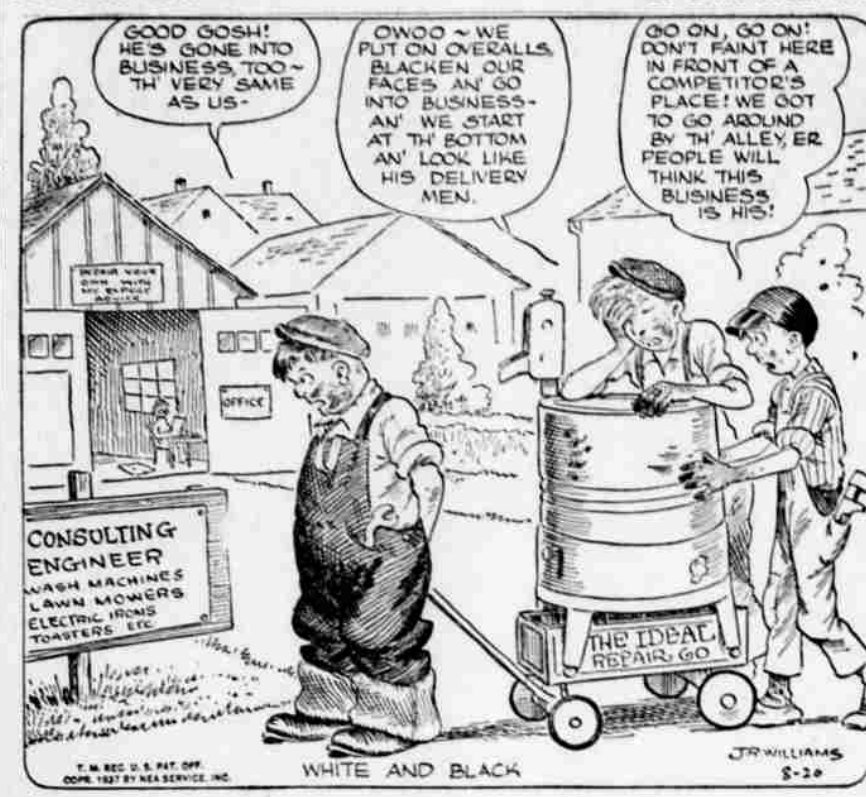
"Let's travel light, my dearest," she whispered. "Clothes can be such a burden!" (THE END)

If you have trouble in starting your motor, turn on your lights and step on the starter again. If the lights grow weak, either your battery is weak or there is some mechanical trouble in the starter or motor.

The speed limit in Pennsylvania is 40 miles an hour and the state police are issuing warnings that they will arrest anyone going 50 miles an hour or over.

Before the Italian occupation of Addis Ababa, there were only 200 automobiles in the city. Now there are 3716 registered trucks, taxis and pleasure vehicles.

OUT OUR WAY



WHITE AND BLACK

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

BY J. R. WILLIAMS



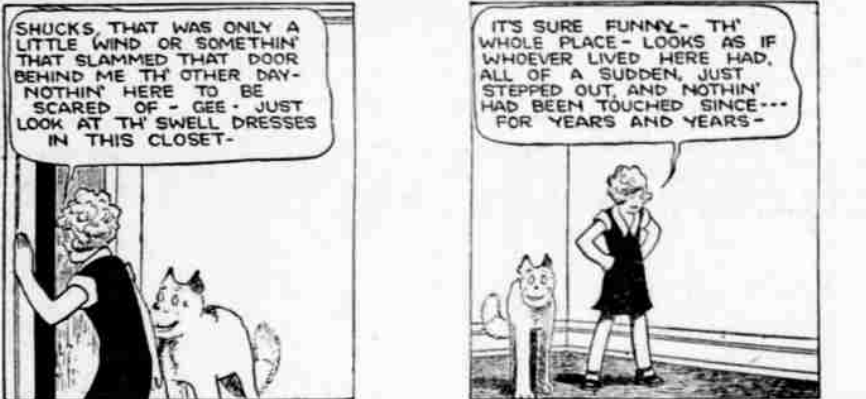
GROWS OF A FEATHER CROW TOGETHER

MYRA NORTH, SPECIAL NURSE



BY THOMPSON AND COLL

LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



BY HAROLD GRAY

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



BY BLOSSER

WASH TUBBS



BY CRANE

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BY MARTIN

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia



BY SYLVIA