

GLORIA

THE FLAPPER WIFE

Gloria, After a Quarrel with Dick, Again Decides to Leave Him.

THE STORY SO FAR: GLORIA, a beautiful flapper, married DICK GREGORY, a struggling lawyer. Her idea of marriage is fun and the clothes. . . but no work or children.

She refuses pointblank to do her own housework and hires a maid. But Dick has to let the maid go because he can't afford her wages. Gloria has swamped him with her debts.

She becomes infatuated with an out-of-work actor, STANLEY WAYBURN. When he leaves town, she goes to New York, she follows him. But he spurns her. Then she tries to get a job as a chorus girl and fails. Gloria begins to realize how lonely she is for Dick. But she is afraid to go home to him.

At last, however, she does go. Dick takes her back but not as his wife. Gloria wonders if he is not in love with his secretary, SUSAN BRIGGS. Dick says out loud one night, "Gloria, I don't love you. I'm in love with Susan."

By Beatrice Burton
H O did all the heavy house work? . . . Not you, I know," Dick said, unbelievably.

But his eyes swept Gloria from her untidy head to the hem of her bedraggled apron. He had never seen her like this before. . .

She certainly looked as if she had been working!

"Who do you suppose did it?" she snapped at him. "The army of servants you've hired to help me? . . . Of course I did it, and I'm all in."

Every bone in her body ached. She dragged herself wearily past Dick into the kitchen. "Dinner's ready," she threw over her shoulder as she went.

The meal was done to a turn. The chicken was richly browned, the vegetables tender, and the salad chilled and crisp.

With the first thrill of housewifely pride that she had ever known, Gloria set the dishes down on the spotless tablecloth.

Marvelling, Dick sat down to eat. "I hope everything's as good as it looks," he said doubtfully. Gloria sent him a look of fury.

"It is!" she said.

And so it was. As he ate, Dick's sense of wonder grew. Had his wife become an expert cook overnight?

But when Gloria brought in the dessert, the mystery was solved for him. "It was Mother, bless her!" he said. "No one in the world makes chocolate custard like that but her!"

"It was not your mother," Gloria

said with honest indignation. "I made that custard all by myself! All your mother did was to sit out in the kitchen and give me orders. . ."

Dick nodded. "Sure, I knew she bossed the job," he said. "You couldn't cook a meal like that alone, on a bet! . . . What's she doing? Giving you cooking lessons?"

Gloria grinned.

"She's been giving me orders, mostly," she answered. "She said she'd come over and help me out. But all she did was to cut a lot of your best roses and strew them all over the house! . . . She's some kid! She ought to be a gang boss! She'd make a peach. . ."

"I wish you wouldn't speak about my mother in that way, Gloria," Dick interrupted. He looked annoyed.

"Oh, blast! I'll do as I please," the girl answered, bitterly. "I'm getting tired of being slammed all the time. It's time I began to pan a few people myself. . . You treat me like a doormat and expect me to like it!"

"If I've treated you like a doormat I'm sorry," Dick apologized. He got up and walked out onto the front porch.

HAT was just like Dick! Whenever he was getting the worst of an argument, he got up and walked away. He was simply maddening!

Well, this was one time when he wouldn't get away with it! She'd walk right out after him, and say what she had to say to him!

Suppose the neighbors did hear it? . . . They probably had a few family battles themselves at times.

But just as Gloria opened the screen door to go out, Dick walked down the front steps and around the house to the backyard.

Gloria ran upstairs and put a touch of rouge on either cheek. Then she followed him out to the garage where he was tinkering with the car.

"Dick," she said in a quiet, even voice, "I can't go on living like this. For three days I've been doing my housework just as well as I know how to do it. . . and I'm willing to go on with it, if you'll only treat me decently. Won't you, please?"

Dick turned toward her. He had taken off his coat and rolled up his sleeves. His hair was ruffled and there was a smear of grease across his cheek. He looked boyish. . .

Gloria took her handkerchief from her apron pocket and rubbed the grease from his face. Her hand dropped to his shoulder and stayed there.

"Dick," she said, "I'm so unhappy. . ."

She looked up at him. In the dusk her eyes were black and luminous, her mouth like a dark flower. "I want you to kiss me, Dick," she murmured. "Let's be friends. . . It's terrible, living at arm's length, this way. . ."

"Two falcons in a snare," Dick quoted. He moved a step or two away from her.

"Now, just what do you mean by that?" Gloria asked sharply. She hated Dick to quote things that she didn't understand from the books he was forever reading.

He shrugged his shoulders. "It doesn't matter," he said. "But I know, myself, that we can't go on living this way. It's impossible. I see it, too."

GLORIA dropped. She braced herself against the side of the garage door.

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" she asked. "Do you want me to leave you? Do you hate me as much as that, Dick?"

He did not answer at once. He took his old pipe from his pocket and filled it.

"It's like this, Gloria," he said finally. "I don't hate you, at all. But . . . you're there, between us, somehow. You see, I can't ever kid myself again that you care about me. I know that you'd be in New York with him now, if he'd wanted you to be there. . . A man doesn't forget a thing like that. No one but a boob like me would ever have had you in his house again, on any terms. . ."

"But I didn't do anything wrong!" Gloria defended herself. "What are a few silly kisses?"

Dick sneered.

"Yes. . . I know that's the way you look at it," he said, "but no decent woman would let any man but her husband kiss her, Gloria. She wouldn't sell herself that way."

Gloria tossed her head impatiently. "Oh, you're so old-fashioned," she answered. "Think of all the petting that goes on at wild parties. And it doesn't mean a thing."

"That makes it all the more rotten, then," Dick pointed out. "Love isn't a game or a toy. It's bigger than any of us. . ."

Puzzle a Day

Edwin C. Aldrich of Oakland, Cal., claims to be the only living son of the Revolution. He is now 87 years old. Eleven years ago he was as old as his father was when Edwin C. was born. How old was Aldrich Jr. when Aldrich Sr. was 5 times as old as his son?

What age must Aldrich Sr. reach to become three times as old as Aldrich Jr.?

Last puzzle answer.

The sketch shows six vacant fields from each of which one cow was removed. This leaves 16 even rows, 4 counting down, 4 counting across, 5 counting diagonally in one direction and 3 counting diagonally in another, making the required total of rows.

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He broke off abruptly. And when he spoke again his voice was quite cold and matter-of-fact. "Come on, let's go into the house. The mosquitoes are beginning to bite out here." He stooped to scratch his ankle.

HEY went in. Silently Gloria cleared the table, piled the dishes on the sink and put the clean milk bottles out on the back porch.

Then she went into the living room to join Dick. But he didn't look up. He went on reading as if he were all alone in the house. . . He was utterly unaware of Gloria.

"Well," she said after ten or fifteen minutes had crawled by, "you treat me just as if I were a piece of furniture or something."

Dick closed his book and laid it on the table. "Did you want to talk to me?" he asked.

"Yes," Gloria answered. Her words came with a rush. "I've been thinking over what you said about Stan Wayburn having come between you and me. . . And yet you keep Miss Briggs working in your office when you know she's in love with you. . . and that I want you to get rid of her!"

Dick gave a short laugh. He picked up his book and opened it. "If every man whose wife wanted him to, would fire his stenographer, half the girls in the country would be out of a job tomorrow morning," he said. "No, I'm not going to fire Miss Briggs. Why should I?"

"She's a good worker. I'd have a hard time filling her place."

There was a flick of finality in his voice.

"Very well, you keep her," Gloria answered. "I should worry. I'm going home to my mother tomorrow, anyway."

Dick made no sign that he had heard her.

"You don't care if I go, do you?" she asked, hoping he'd say he did care.

"I want you to do whatever you think will make you happy," Dick said gravely. "You know you can stay here as long as you like. But if you'd rather live with your mother and father, I'll take care of you. I'll send you all the money I can spare every week. So do as you please."

Gloria tried to smile. . . a poor little smile that barely lifted the corners of her mouth. Her throat swelled and her eyes ached with unshed tears.

"All right, old dear," she said, trying to make her voice light and careless. But a high note of agony ran through it.

INCREDIBLY she went straight to sleep, her worn-out body throbbing in every nerve.

And at dawn the next morning she awoke.

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She sat up in bed and looked around her room. . . the familiar room with its wide window-seat, its flowered cushions and silver picture frames.

Tomorrow morning she'd be waking up in the shabby little house. Shuddering, Gloria thought of it. . . the brown spot on the ceiling where the rain had leaked through the roof, the blistered woodwork, the battered iron bed.

How she had always hated that little room that was too cold in the winter, too hot in the summer! And how utterly glad she had been to escape from it, when she had married Dick Gregory!

A tear slid down Gloria's cheek as she thought of all the mornings of her future. . . the lonely awakenings in that little room.

HE lay with closed eyes and heard Dick stirring in his room, whistling in his bath, singing "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," as he dressed.

Later the sound of his car leaving the yard. Then silence. She would not see him again, she knew. . .

The doorbell rang. Gloria slipped has naked feet into the bedroom slippers, threw a kimono around her, and ran downstairs.

Through the net curtains on the front door, she could see May Seymour standing on the porch. What in the world did May want, coming at that time of the morning?

"Hello, Glory, how's every little thing with you?" she asked, as she came into the hall. Her face was white as paper under her black crepe hat and there were faint mauve marks under her eyes.

"Fine as silk," Gloria answered, borrowing the brave phrase that her father used when things were at their very worst. "And you. . . How are you, May?"

May tried to answer. Then, suddenly, she collapsed upon a chair, buried her face in her hands, and burst into horrible, shaking sobs.

She opened her handbag and took from it a folded bit torn from a newspaper.

"Read that," she sobbed. (To Be Continued)

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