

The Love Dodger

By VIRGINIA SWAIN

BARBARA TRAILS MANNERS AS HE FLEES FROM HIS OFFICE AND LEAVES THE CITY

BEGIN HERE TODAY

BARBARA HAWLEY, 35, self-willed and talented, breaks with her fiancé, BRUCE REYNOLDS, and sets a trap for him. She is a former friend of her father, JEFFREY, who makes friends with BOB STONE, a prominent man in a real estate office, where she picks up a red coat belonging to the dead man's unknown woman companion.

Barbara meets the acquaintance of JEROME HALL, a man about town. Bruce has joined the real estate firm of Manners, Stone & Reynolds, which is promoting a huge city development scheme. MRS. LYDIA STACY, a rich widow, refuses to invest in it after Bruce fails to respond to her blandishments.

Barbara receives and prints in her favorite column many letters from a girl named Violetta. When she sees the announcement of Bruce's marriage to VIOLETTA CRANFORD, she realizes that she has directed Violetta's campaign to catch him.

Barbara's mother is taken very ill. In the building where Manners, Stone & Reynolds has its offices, Barbara sees Manners, the senior partner, carrying down the fire escape. His stenographer has just told her he was out of town.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXV

MANNERS' great post the window without seeing her, and on down the fire escape, Barbara stood still on the stair landing. At last she caught her breath and started back down the stairs at a run. She reached the front sidewalk just in time to see a taxicab turn into the alley which led to the fire escape at the back of the building. Barbara halted another taxi. Her cab wheeled into the alley as Manners' cab left it at the other end. She called to the driver to hurry and then settled back in the tonneau. They came out into the street at the end of the alley. Manners' cab was not far ahead. Barbara's driver was speeding, but the car ahead increased its speed also. She expected it to turn toward the railroad station, but it did not.

The chase went on through the streets of the city and out into the country. Barbara was beginning to wonder whether Manners meant to travel across country in a hired cab, when she noticed that they were following the railroad tracks. A whistle sounded not far away.

The car which led to the fire escape suddenly and came to a stop exactly on the railroad tracks. Barbara thrust her head out of the cab and saw a train coming from the direction of town.

Manners' car still sat on the rails,

The driver jumped out and ran down the side of the track bed, waving his coat about his head. Manners did not get out of the tonneau. Barbara shuddered. It seemed certain death for the man in the taxi. The train came on, with no slackening of speed. Barbara looked again. The taxi driver was still cowering and down, waving the coat.

The great locomotive made the last curve and came to a stop. Barbara saw Manners jump from the car and run for the train. The engineer was shouting at the cab driver, who was running back to his machine.

Manners made a leap for the train steps, the taxi driver was in his seat and the car moved off the tracks. In a moment the limited was on its way again.

As it shot past, Barbara saw Manners hurl something at the cab driver from the platform on which he stood. The man picked up the object, pocketed it and drove away. Barbara's driver put his head through the window. "Where to now, miss?"

"Back to the Telegraph office as fast as possible."

Every telephone was in use when she entered the editorial room. She jerked Jimmy bodily out of the dictation booth and called the bank.

The cashier there was a friend of hers. "Have you heard anything about the Manners, Stone & Reynolds bunch?" she asked him.

"Haven't heard anything about the company," he replied, "but Manners himself just closed his account and beat it in a great hurry. Queer proceeding all the way through. What's up?"

But Barbara had replaced the receiver.

McDermott was busy with a caller when she left the telephone booth. She paced the office restlessly, so that Miss Badger gave her a disapproving look, and Jimmy asked what was the matter.

At last the caller departed and McDermott burst into the managing editor's office.

"I'd rather not tell you this," she said, "for many reasons. But I must. Manners just skipped town with his baggage. His bank says he closed his account this afternoon. And his

office is telling every one that he's been out of town several days."

McDermott slowly laid down his pen.

"Zat so?" he asked. His eyes were curiously sleepy.

Barbara clasped her hands. "Bob says there's a nigger in the woodpile of that company anyway. And something is surely amiss in Manners' way of leaving. He sneaked out of town in a taxi, stopped the east-bound limited and jumped aboard. I'll bet he never comes back to Indianapolis—at least of his own accord."

McDermott rose and pressed a button. Jimmy appeared. "Tell Wells and the foreman to come here."

"What are you going to do?" almost whispered Barbara, clasping her hands more tightly and watching his face.

"Look here, Miss Hawley, don't fret about this business. It isn't your fault if we have to wreck Bruce Reynolds' company. I've been watching 'em ever since Lydia Stacy paid her last visit to me. You know that lady never pays a visit without a purpose."

Barbara gasped. "She didn't—"

"Yes, she did. Gave me the hint that the company was rotten, with-out ever committing herself. Suggested that she had discovered its rottenness and that is why she decided not to go into it. I'm inclined to think there was another reason. She hasn't been seen with this young Reynolds since the night of the party."

Wells and the foreman entered the office. "Going to extra, boys, just as soon as we get the last dope on this Vale Acres gang. Miss Hawley saw Manners skip town in a taxi and says his office is lying about his whereabouts."

"Get ready and wait for orders. You, Wells, look up all we've printed on the project so far, and get the names of heavy investors. Gotta be a sucker list that will knock their eyes out. Miss Hawley, you call Manners' home and ask about him, then rush over to see Stone and Reynolds and report what they say at once."

Barbara found herself in the ele-

valuator going down within a moment or two.

She climbed the steps to the office building for the third time that day, and found the hall outside the Manners, Stone and Reynolds office deserted.

The reception office was also empty when she went into it.

The haughty stenographer entered from an inner corridor. "I told you Mr. Manners was not in town," she snapped before Barbara had time to speak.

Barbara threw her head back. "I don't want to see Mr. Manners. I happen to know too well that he can't be seen. But I do want to see Mr. Stone or Mr. Reynolds."

The woman seemed surprised at her sharp retort. "Mr. Stone is in his private office," she said, "and Mr. Reynolds is also out of town—expected back until tonight."

Barbara went through the office to Stone's private room.

When Barbara entered the office he started up and gave her a troubled look.

"Yes," he said, in answer to her introduction of herself. "I saw you in the office today. I regret that Mr. Manners is not here to tell you what you want to know."

"Mr. Manners would not be likely to tell me if he were here," remarked Barbara coolly.

"What do you mean?"

"Just this," she replied. "I saw Manners leave this building by the fire escape not ten minutes after your office girl had said he was out of town. He caught the east-bound limited and I think there's something wrong. The bank tells me he's just closed his account."

Stone turned gray. He swallowed several times before he could speak. "Now, Miss Hawley, let's not be hasty. Great harm can be done by jumping at conclusions in a time like this. For God's sake, Miss Hawley, give us a chance. It's a civil matter."

"And if the public loses faith in this company, thousands of dollars will be lost. If the papers will only help us, we'll pull through all right and explain everything."

"The Telegraph will not be too anxious to help you flim-flam the public," said Barbara slowly.

Stone's face worked. He put his head down on his arms and began to cry. Barbara saw that there was no use in waiting. She left the office.

"On what train do you expect Mr. Reynolds?" she asked the woman in the outer room.

"On the 8 o'clock from the East," replied the woman.

Barbara hurried back to the Telegraph office, and into McDermott's private room.

"Look here, Miss Hawley," he said. "We've got this story covered up, I think. And we're not entirely sure of the facts yet. I've decided to hold off until tomorrow morning and extra early, to catch the crowds on their way to work. You've done your share. Now you can go home."

To his great surprise, instead of going, Barbara sat down opposite him and began to cry.

McDermott laid down his pipe nervously. He looked about for help. Seeing none, he said to her, "Look here, Miss Hawley. You're wearing out under this life. What're you going to do about it? You're a darn good newspaper woman, but damned if I don't hate to see you give way as you are doing lately."

"Why don't you get married?"

Barbara only sobbed the harder.

"There, I didn't mean that imper-fectly. But sometimes I wonder how on earth you happen to be in this game. I know you're not the kind of woman who'd want to marry just to stop working. But why kill yourself in a newspaper job?"

"You see I'm talking like your father's friend, not, like your boss."

Barbara was crying harder than ever. "Bruce Reynolds will believe that I've ruined him," she choked.

BARBARA slept little that night.

All at once she was out of bed as a sound came from her mother's room. Barbara snatched her bathrobe from a chair and ran into the hall.

Barbara stole to the door and listened. Someone was stirring inside. She pushed the door open. The night nurse lay asleep on her cot. Mrs. Hawley was sitting upright in bed, her head drooping.

"Mother dear," whispered Barbara, slipping into the room noiselessly. "What's the matter?"

"Babs, dear," she said huskily, and Barbara's heart almost stopped. Her mother's voice was so unfamiliar.

She sat down on the bedside and put her arm around her mother's shoulders. "Are you feeling worse, mother? Shall I call Miss Upton?"

The older woman shook her head, feebly. "No, I want to talk to you, Barbara. We may not have another chance."

Barbara choked. "Nonsense, mother dear. Dr. Graham told me today you were on the mend. You mustn't let these night thoughts get hold of you. In a few days you're going to be sitting up by the dining room window, with Kiki singing in his cage beside you. Just wait."

"Perhaps, Babs—and perhaps not. But anyhow, I want to talk to you now."

"All right, mumsy, but don't ever say such gloomy things again. They're not true and I can't stand them. What's on your mind?"

"Just this, Babs," her mother replied slowly. "I'm worried about you. It seems to be you're living a miserable life. Day after day, I've watched you and feared for you. How long can you go on like this? You're missing everything that makes life worth living."

Mrs. Hawley sank lower in the bed from the effort of speaking.

"Why, honey," replied Barbara. "I'm not leading such a hard life. It's long hours and heavy work, but I like it. And you know I wanted my own life. You mustn't worry about me."

Her mother was not listening. "If I should go, Barbara, what would become of you? It terrifies me. I'm afraid to die because of it. You'll be knocked around with nobody to care what happens to you."

"It isn't the old maid part of it that is so awful—it's the being alone in your later years—not having any place that belongs to you. I'm afraid I should not have encouraged you to give up Bruce."

Mrs. Hawley's head drooped sideways on the pillow. Barbara saw tears glistening.

Of those restless souls who can never be satisfied to belong anywhere. If I were tied to a home and a man, I'd be kicking over the traces in a year or two and going out for adventure. And that would be worse than the life I'm in now."

"As for Bruce,"—her voice was harsh—"he's proved what sort he is by marrying his Violetta. You ought to thank God you backed me up on that."

Mrs. Hawley reached for her hand. "There's nothing in all the world so fearful as loneliness, Babs," she said. "We all have to go through life more or less by ourselves. Nobody can meet the crisis with us. But just to have somebody who loves us—that's the only defense there is against the cold."

Barbara stood looking at her helplessly. "What is it you want me to do, mumsy?" she asked. "I'd do anything to make you happy."

Mrs. Hawley raised her eyes to Barbara's. They were glittering with fever. "Promise me that if love ever comes again, you'll take it, Barbara."

The girl turned her head away. "That's a large promise, mumsy," she said. "I don't trust love. And it won't come again. But I'll always be able to take care of myself." She spoke brightly.

The woman in the bed stirred restlessly and slipped down among the pillows. "It's a terrible thing—this living."

Barbara went back to bed and to sleep almost at once. Youth and health demanded their due.

In the morning, when Barbara awoke, she found her mother much better. Miss Upton, the nurse, arranged a breakfast table by the bed, where Barbara could eat with her mother. Mrs. Hawley was brighter than for many days, and listened cheerfully while Barbara talked. But sometimes a shadow passed across her drawn face.

A newsboy out on the street shouted "Wuxtry." Barbara ran to the window. She knocked on the window and beckoned to him.

She met him with the necessary pennies on the front porch. "Big real estate swindle," said he, his freckled face beaming at her.

Barbara tore the paper open. Black scare headlines told the story: "Millions lost in Vale Acres. Manners skips town with entire bank account of firm. Hundreds of local people hit."

Barbara turned faint. "What was the extra, Barbara?" called her mother as she passed through the hall.

"Just some big business story, mother."

Barbara reached the Telegraph office an hour late. "How come, Barbara?" asked Bob. "Seems to me you're neglecting your precious Kay-reer." He stopped at sight of her face.

Wells looked up. "Miss Hawley," he cried tensely. "Where on earth have you been? It's almost 8:30. Young Reynolds was expected in on the 8 o'clock train, and I wanted to send you to meet him and get a statement. You're the only one that knows this story all the way through."

He was running through a pile of clippings and did not see Barbara's white face. "Dash over at once and see if you can catch young Reynolds. Get some kind of statement."

"I will ask for a statement, Mr. Wells, but I won't do more than ask."

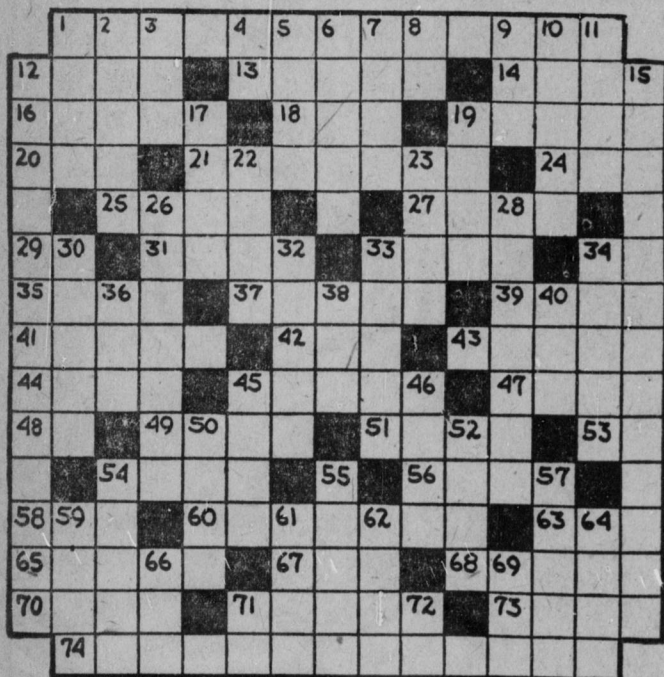
Barbara left the Telegraph office. In the building where Bruce had his office Barbara found herself in a crowd that stormed the elevator. Men were gesticulating and women were talking in high pitched voices. When the car reached the floor on which the Manners, Stone & Reynolds office was located, the crowd poured out. Barbara was thrust forward against her will.

Men were blocking the door of the suite. Barbara pushed through the throng and set out for a rear door, which opened around the corner. Her heart was pounding and her head felt giddy.

The door opened in front of her and Bruce came out. He was bare-headed and walked as though unconscious where he was. Barbara saw a ruffled lock of hair standing up on his head. She gave a little gasp and ran toward him.

Bruce did not seem to see her. (To Be Continued)

Today's Cross-Word Puzzle



- HORIZONTAL**
- A going back in development.
 - Tuberous root stock used in Ha-waii.
 - Serf.
 - Perished.
 - Female figure praying.
 - Indian from Utah.
 - Pertaining to a soft palate.
 - To soak flax.
 - Peeling deeply.
 - Silk worm.
 - Pot.
 - Opposite of soft.
 - You and me.
 - High mountains.
 - To distribute grudgingly.
 - Morinda dye.
 - Morning.
 - Musical character.
 - Bubbles of soap.
 - To place in line.
 - Inset.
 - Bulb flower.
 - Woven string.
 - Kindled again.
 - To apportion.
 - Correlative of either.
 - Invasion of police.
 - Double point (geometrical).
 - Point of compass.
 - Venomous snakes.
 - Discumbers.
 - Ancient.
 - One who withdraws from a party.
 - To employ.
 - Mate of a gander.
 - Beer.
 - Small wax candle.
 - Long ago.
 - Narrow street.
 - Church seats.
 - Machines for testing metal.
- VERTICAL**
- Uncommon.
 - Muse of poetry.
 - 2,000 pounds.
 - Bone.
 - To surf.
 - Valued.
 - To level.
 - Point of compass.
 - Small fish.
 - Lubricated.
 - Close.
 - Study of embossed work.
 - Low-speed drilling machine.
 - To blow.
 - Meat.
 - Sleeps.
 - Factory.
 - Female falcons.
 - Began again.
 - Pertaining to the sun.
 - Small piece of material.
 - Sewer.
 - Passages.
 - To tear.
 - To be sick.
 - Rubber tree.
 - To get up.
 - Ripped.
 - Portion of a church.
 - Soil.
 - To love.
 - String instrument.
 - Unusually large.
 - To appear above the horizon.
 - To phone.
 - To judge.
 - Hens.
 - Matching dishes.
 - To imitate.
 - Dye.
 - You.

Answer to Saturday's Crossword Puzzle:

STOP TRADITION
 TEN TEAM DOOR D
 ELLIAH TERNATE
 ELLIAH DEAN GOT
 STILL HE BULL
 SAME DATA SOLLE
 RENT TEST WANT
 F SCAR LOOM REI
 OD EYES NEAT SO
 ORE EVIL SIRE N
 TERM IDEA DART
 BAN ASEA REMAIN
 AD EYES DENS NE
 LITAWED PAGES AGE
 LITER LAND DIED

'SWINDLE' TRIAL IS SET

Consolidated Company Officials to Face Jury Jan. 18.

By United Press
 CHICAGO, Jan. 9.—Trial of officials of the Consolidated Realty and Theaters Company charged with mulcting several thousand Indiana and Illinois investors out of \$4,000,000, will start here Jan. 18.

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By Martin



OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



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