

A Wife on Leave

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WHO'S WHO AND WHAT'S HAPPENED

Richard Brabant, a successful young lawyer, has given a year's leave of absence to his wife.

Sally, hoping that she will be changed from a butterfly to a woman by learning something of life. She meets

Keith Gilbert, always labelled "Dangerous," and through him associates with New York's gayest crowd of celebrities, among them:

Lee Craig, a pretty artist, and Graham Browne, a well-known financier. The gay life that Sally leads is not approved by her friend, Barbara Lane, an old-fashioned wife, but is shared by

Patricia Loring, a modern flapper, who resents the fact that Gilbert is madly in love with Sally as she wants him for herself. With Sally she goes to a house-party at Gilbert's country place, and is there when revenue officers appear to arrest Gilbert on a charge of bootlegging on his scale, and because one of his men has killed an officer during a fight. Gilbert flees into the night, taking Sally with him, and tries to kidnap her, but she is rescued by

Neal Calhoun, who is trailing Gilbert. Gilbert accuses Sally of betraying him to Calhoun, and vows vengeance. He is imprisoned, but escapes. Sally goes with Barbara Lane and her husband, Andrew, to a house-party at the Randall's. At the country club there she meets Gilbert, who goes under an assumed name, and is looking for her. Neal Calhoun rescues her when Keith Gilbert is captured. Returning home, Sally finds that her bank account is overdrawn, her rent overdue, her lease expired and that her mother-in-law has gone to Europe and so cannot help her. She decides to go to work. She assumes the name of Mrs. Pemberton.

CHAPTER XLVII—A WORLD APART

Sally found the Finches established in a suite overlooking the park; expensive baskets of flowers stood about, and everywhere there were evidences of shopping done neither wisely, nor too well.

Mrs. Finch was a short, stout woman who looked as if she had been jammed into the modish suit that was so inappropriate for her. She was uncomfortable, ill at ease, but obviously determined to impress Sally with her wealth. She was not at all averse to telling of the lucky fluke that had brought her husband some property on which oil had been discovered; that his possession of it had come about through events which reflected no glory on him seemed to make no difference. To Sally's honest eyes it seemed that Mr. Finch had deliberately cheated the man who owned the land, but apparently that mattered little to the resplendent Mrs. Finch, who twisted great diamond rings on her fingers as she prattled of the family fortunes.

Claire Finch had inherited her mother's tendency to stoutness, and the maternal pomposity of manner as well. She also was inclined to patronize Sally and drag the Finch wealth into the foreground. But she realized, as her mother did not, that Sally's costume, though unostentatious, was correct in every detail, and in far better taste than the rustling silks which Mrs. Finch favored for morning wear.

She was one of those large, bulky looking girls over whom modistes wring their hands in despair. No matter what she wore, she was destined to look as if she should have worn almost anything else. Her hair was luxuriant and beautiful, but she had followed the example of her prettier schoolmates and dressed it fashionably but unbecomingly. Beside Sally she looked hopelessly large and unattractive.

Mrs. Finch made no secret of her desire to get her daughter married off in the East, as soon as possible.

"Claire won't ever be happy at home; the town's too small," she declared; Sally suspected that the Finches did not have the social position they desired in the town which had seen their sudden and questionable attainment of wealth. "I want her to have everything she's entitled to, and I guess if she can marry and settle down here in New York she'd better."

Mrs. Finch went on at length about her ambitions for Claire; the man must have position and money of course, though that didn't matter much; Dan Finch could set up a home for his girl as good as any in the city, if he'd a mind to! Claire was just a child still, she assured Sally; she didn't know a thing about the ways of the world! Sally, catching a glimpse at that moment of Claire's shrewd, shifty eyes, formed an opinion of her own.

And Claire was to have a good time—"go places and see folks," as Mrs. Finch put it. She was honest at least in her desire to make the girl happy. Sally thought, as she listened to the pretentious little woman, if only she had been honest about other things she would have had some dignity.

Claire went out to the elevator with Sally; slipping one arm through hers, she exclaimed,

"We'll have a good time when we cut loose from Ma-Mama, won't we? I'm not such a kid as she thinks I am, you know—I can smoke and jazz around with any live bunch, believe me! I'm a pretty snappy vamp when I get started, I'll let the world know!"

Sally fought with a sense of despondency as the elevator carried her down to the lobby. She had thought, when Claire seemed like her mother, that things were as bad as they could be. To find that the overgrown, gawky girl was of the cabaret type made matters infinitely worse. Claire had begun to tell her of a flirtation she had had with a strange man on the train coming down from school, giggling and stammering through the silly recital.

"And that's what I've got to live with!" she told herself disgustedly, sinking down for a moment in one of the chairs in the lobby to rest before she made the trip back to her boarding house.

She had always liked this hotel, had always had a little special fondness for it. When she and Dick returned from their honeymoon they had come to it for a few days until their apartment was ready for them. Sally had never forgotten those days—she had been selecting the very furnishings that were now being stored! The day when Dick phoned that he'd found exactly the rug for the library; the morning when they had discovered



Claire Finch was bulky and unattractive at seventeen.

that her bedroom furniture was all wrong, and spent hours selecting the



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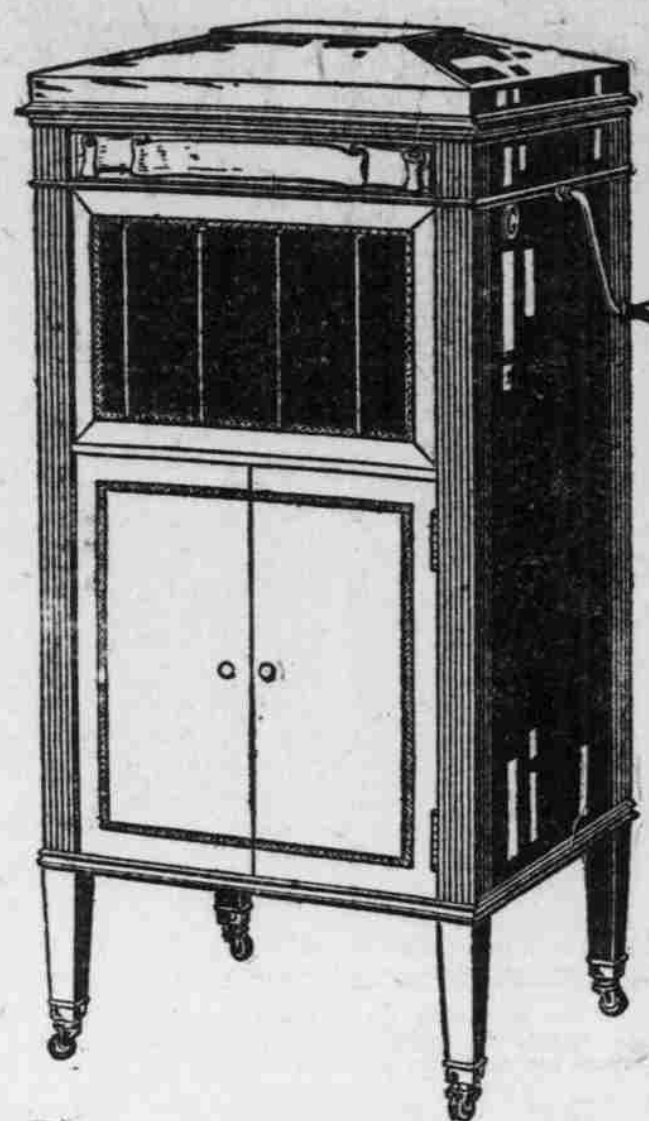
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