

A BACHELOR HUSBAND

By RUBY M. AYRES

Author of "Richard Chatterton," Etc.
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THIS BEGINS THE STORY

Marie Chester and Christopher Lawless were raised together; their fathers were friends and their mothers were sisters. Marie loved him and he loved her; he because she was so kind and needed money, she because she loved him and he needed money. They were never parted for a moment and when they were married they went to a hotel where he thought would be sure to meet a lot of his friends, and did. Marie, however, the truth about her husband, was a nice clean chap but he does not love his wife. After a while she continues to love him and that he is not a Bachelor Husband. She is not a Bachelor Wife. She is not a Bachelor Husband. She is not a Bachelor Wife. She is not a Bachelor Husband. She is not a Bachelor Wife.

He dived from the boat for his friend's side, but Feathers shook him off. "Get away... you fool! Can't you see you're hampering me?" He dived again and again, desperately swimming under water in a vain search for the drowning girl. Young Atkins had clambered back to the boat. He sat there in the hot sun, his face in his hands, sobbing like a woman. "Will you?" He felt that it was all his fault. He knew he could never be able to face Marie again. Over and over in his mind he saw them—once, the day she was only married yesterday; only married yesterday! At that moment he would gladly have given his life for hers. He felt that he would not go on living if she had gone. And then a sudden wild shout went up from the crowds on the beach. Young Atkins looked up, not daring to hope, and there in the sea, only a few yards from the boat, the rough dark head of Feathers appeared above the smooth water, swimming strongly with one arm and supporting a small, helpless object with the other. He seemed to have forgotten the boat, for he made straight for the shore, and though eager men waded out to his help, and a dozen pairs of arms were stretched out to take his burden from him, he shook his head and held her jealously. "Beauty and the beast!" some one whispered as the tall, ugly man waded ashore with the girl's limp body in his arms. Perhaps he heard, for at any rate a faint, grim smile crossed his dark face as he laid her down on the warm sands. There was a doctor among the crowd, and a little group closed about her, chafing her limbs, working her arms up and down, frantically trying to beat life back into the inert little body. Feathers stood by, breathing hard, the water dripping from him. He kept his eyes fixed on Marie's deathly face. A woman in the crowd began to cry. "Poor child!" "Poor child!" For Marie Celeste looked only a child as she lay there, her wet hair tumbling all around her. "It's too late, she's gone," some one else said, hopelessly, and Feathers turned like a lion. "It's not too late," he thundered. He went down on his knees beside her, exhausted as he was, and worked like a giant to save her, and all the time he was wondering what Chris would do, what Chris would say, and if he would be expected to break the news to him. And then, after a long time, a little shell-like thing of color crept back to the marble whiteness of Marie's face—the doctor gave a little exclamation, and went on with his work harder than before. Feathers asked him a harsh question: "Can we save her?" "I think so—yes!" "I think so—yes!" Each moment seemed an eternity, until, with labored, choking breaths and little gasping cries, Marie struggled back to life and the golden summer morning. Feathers rose to his feet. "I'll go on and tell her husband. You're sure she's out of danger?" "Oh, she's all right now." He turned to the stretcher upon which they had laid the girl, and Feathers started to walk away, but the crowd would not have this. They surged round him, slapping him on the back and cheering him to the echo. They were only too eager to praise him, to give praise where it was due, and at last, in desperation, Feathers broke into a run and eluded them. He went into the hotel across the garden, and threw a side door, his dripping clothes leaving little wet marks all the way. He met one of the porters in the passage. The man stopped with a gasp of dismay. "Good heavens, sir! Has there been an accident?" "Yes, one of the ladies here, a Mrs. Lawless, but she's all right now. Can you find her husband for me? He's probably in the writing room. Do you know him?" "Oh, yes, sir, but..." "Well, give off and fetch him, then. I'm all right—don't make a fuss. They're bringing her here. Hurry, man, hurry!" He was back in a moment with Chris, looking greatly surprised and not at all upset, for the porter had been afraid to tell him the truth of what had happened, and had merely said he was wanted. Feathers explained in a few words. "Mrs. Lawless got out of her depths or got cramp or something, but she's all right. She had a nasty scare, though. It's all right; they're bringing her along." Chris went dreadfully white. He clutched his friend's arm. "You're not lying to me, are you? She's not—she's not—dead?" Feathers laughed. "Good lord, man, no! I tell you it's all right. She got a bit of a ducking. She's probably back in the hotel by this time; you'd better go and see for yourself." But Chris had gone before he had finished speaking, and Feathers crept away up to his room and peeled off his soggy clothes. He felt very exhausted now it was all over. It had been a ghastly five minutes when he dived again and again into that still green water. He felt that he would never care for the sea in the same way any more. Supposing she had been drowned! Although he knew that she was safe and well, and tomorrow would probably be none the worse for her accident, Feathers involuntarily echoed the words of the woman in the crowd who had wept. "Poor child! poor child!" He laughed at himself directly afterward, as he got into a dry suit, tried to reduce some sort of order to his unruly hair, and went downstairs. It was a simple sort of fellow, and thought so little of his own action that it gave him a positive shock when the visitors in the lounge insisted on giving him a cheer as he went through. The news of what had occurred had spread like wildfire, and red-faced and frowning angrily, Feathers had to submit to being made a hero.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

YOUNG ATKINS called on her from a diving stage a little distance out, and she dived into the water and swam up to him. "Ripping, isn't it?" he said as she clambered up to sit beside him in the boat. "Look here! I'll race you round that buoy and back! Will you?" "Yes—I'll let you a box of cigarettes." "Right! Let you a box of cigarettes you don't!" They dived from the diving stage together, laughing and full of excitement. They were both good swimmers, and for a little they kept abreast, but slowly but surely young Atkins won. Marie felt rather tired. They were swimming toward the sun, and its brightness blinded her. Her headache returned to her. She had almost forgotten it until a little stabbing pain in her temples made her close her eyes. She thought it must be because she had not slept all night. That would account for her feeling of weakness and lassitude. She ought not to have come out so far—sudden panic closed about her heart—she tried to call to the boy behind her, but a little wave broke over her face and carried her voice away. She thought that she screamed aloud in error, for she was not in the sun, but in the blue and blotted out world, leaving only miles and miles of clear, green water, into which she sank slowly.

CHAPTER IV

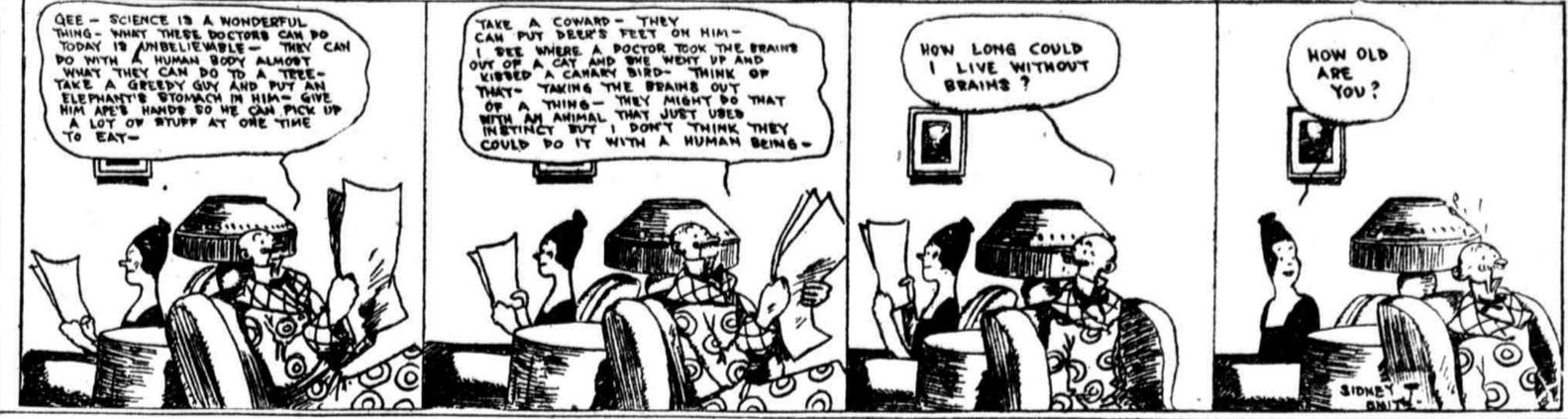
Chris Lawless came back into the hotel lounge almost as soon as his wife and young Atkins had left it. He looked quickly around for Marie. His conscience had begun to prick him a little. He had noticed the pallor of Marie's face at breakfast time, and something strained in her determined cheerfulness, and good feeling that really was a heart's content. He had meant to do the right thing when he married her. He had always prided himself upon being a gentleman. He had no intention of allowing people to say that he neglected his wife, or that his marriage had ended in a failure. He liked everything he undertook to be a success. And he was fond of Marie. He had always been fond of her in his own way. There was no earthly reason that could see why she should not get on well together. But Marie was not in the lounge. He looked around with a slight frown, and his gaze fell upon Feathers, yawning at his paper. "Where's Marie?" "She went out just now with Atkins. I heard them say something about a swim." Chris looked annoyed. "She ought to have waited for me," he said shortly. "Atkins takes too much upon himself." Feathers rose and threw down his paper. "They've only just gone," he said. "I can catch them up if you come." But Chris was thoroughly out of temper. He had letters to write, he had to get before long. He turned away and Feathers strolled out into the sunshine. He knew to which beach Marie and Atkins had gone, and he sauntered slowly along in that direction. It was a glorious morning, and the beach was crowded. The hot sun shined down on his uncovered head and back, and one or two women looked after him interestedly. Feathers was not just merely ugly and unattractive, some of them realized with strength and character in his face, with true femininity wondered what his wife was like. But Feathers was unmarried, and he intended to remain so. He had a roving life, and always declined to be put on a clean collar or wash his hands unless he had inclined to for any woman's sake. "Not that any woman is ever likely to interest herself in my hands or collar," he added rudely. Chris had sworn eternal bachelorhood, which partly accounted for Feathers' disgust when he wrote to him of his intended marriage. He had written back a sarcastic letter which Chris had carefully destroyed without showing it to Marie. "I never thought you were a petti- cious fellow. What is the change in your mind? Is it money, brains or merely a pretty face? I won't marry your best man—I won't marry you to your beastly wedding. If you can do so without my assistance, I don't care crying to me for help. I'll ash my hands of you!" He had been quite prepared to dis- miss Marie, but then—how could he argue to a child?—anybody dislike a child?—and his sentiments were right around the other way. He decided that to all probability the smallest child, or in what way, he had the smallest child. But he had offered her his friend- ship in the surest manner of her re- ceiving it, and as he strolled along now, he looked through the crowds of holiday-makers, keeping a careless lookout for young Atkins.

There were a great many people watching, and he stopped for a moment, and scanned the low railing that divided the promenade from the beach, scanning the clattering and screaming going on among the girls and women in the sunbathing and sunbathing. Why did they could there be in standing in a few minutes of water shivering and scream- ing? And then all at once a change came over the whole scene. From light- hearted and fear. People left their seats

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THE GUMPS—Merely a Question of Birthdays

By Sidney Smith



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Now She Has a Poor Opinion of the Boss

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The Young Lady Across the Way

SIGNALS! 23—P-D-Q-23

By FONTAINE FOX

SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG



The young lady across the way says anything above 8 per cent is exorbitant.

WHEN A COUPLE OF LADIES STOP TO GAB ON THE PATH CROSSING THE FIELD, THE SIGNAL, "23—P-D-Q-23"—IS GIVEN AND IT CALLS FOR A FORWARD PASS WHOSE PURPOSE BOTH SIDES UNDERSTAND AND WHICH NO PLAYER EVER TRIES TO BLOCK.

THE SALAMANDERS

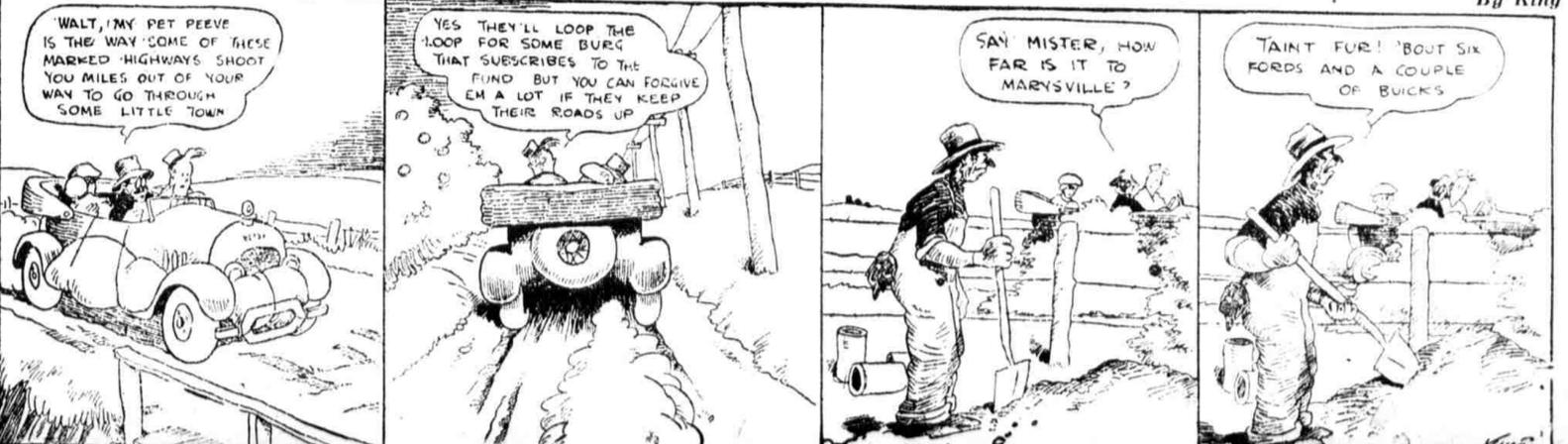
PETEY—He's Learning

By C. A. Voight



GASOLINE ALLEY—Nearly There

By King



CONTINUED TOMORROW