

BURGESS BEDTIME STORIES

By THORNTON W. BURGESS
Peter Listens to An Unbelievable Story. Such fun as Danny and Nanny

But at last Peter had to believe. Of course, right away he wanted to know where they had been all the long winter.
"Everybody thinks you are dead," he declared. "How under the sun did you keep hidden so that no one

got a glimpse of you or found a single sign of you? Where were you?"
"We spent the winter way down in the Sunny South, where the feathered folk go every year," replied Danny in a very matter of fact tone.
"Where is that?" exclaimed Peter.
"Where is that?" Peter repeated in a dignant. Yes, sir, Peter actually grew indignant. "This is a nice way to treat an old friend!" he exclaimed.
"Of course, if you have a secret hiding place you have a perfect right to keep it a secret. But why tell me such an impossible, foolish story as this?"

"But it is the truth," said Nanny. "We really did spend the winter way down in the Sunny South. Peter, we didn't see a flake of snow. It was just like summer down there. And we saw the strangest things. There are some of the queerest people down there you ever heard of."

THE NEBBS



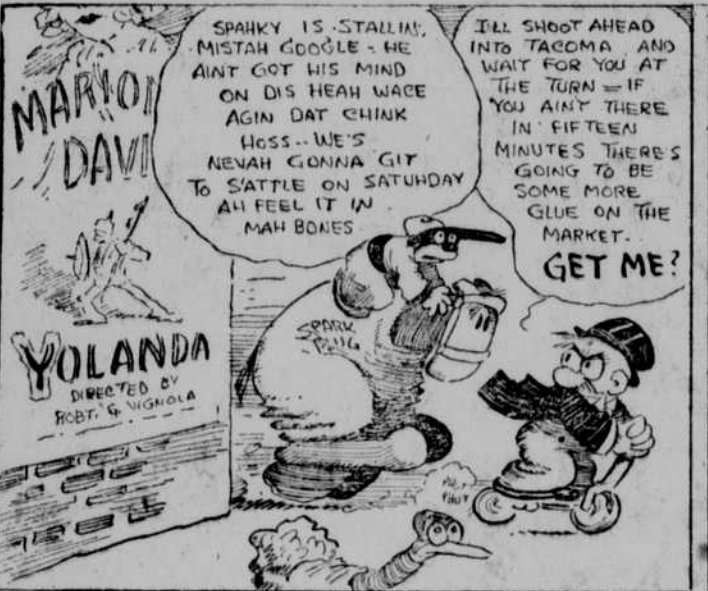
THE BELLE OF NORTHVILLE.

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess

Barney Google and Spark Plug

Barney's Words Are Directly to the Point.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck



BRINGING UP FATHER

Registered U. S. Patent Office SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus



JERRY ON THE JOB

THE PATIENT SEEMS STRONGER

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban



That Guiltiest Feeling

By Briggs ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield



CORDELIA THE MAGNIFICENT

By LEROY SCOTT.

(Continued From Yesterday.)

CHAPTER VII. The days of adroit watching that followed brought no new incidents and revealed few new facts. But they confirmed Cordelia's first impression that there was a hidden something at Rolling Meadows, and confirmed and enlarged her opinion of the people: Gladys was fitfully generous and gay, fitfully cross and impatient; now that Cordelia was seeing her intimately, she noted that Gladys seemed constantly under a nervous strain, for which the planning of the coming party seemed hardly an adequate explanation.
The more Cordelia saw of Esther Stevens, the more she liked the quiet step-sister. On several occasions Esther spoke in amusement of herself, she had been engaged before the war—had been jilted for a handsome woman with a handsome inheritance—an old maid had to do something with her money, so she had brought the fragments to Gladys. She was congenitally lazy, she said, so she had remained with Gladys ever since. To Cordelia she seemed so competent that Cordelia could hardly believe she was here just for a pensioner's case.

A Curious Fact. The outstanding fact Cordelia noted about Esther was her love for the adopted Francis. Her love seemed far greater than that of Gladys. Had she been the boy's actual mother she could not have shown greater concern in every detail affecting him. And Francis plainly loved her better than his other mother; really liked her better than he did Mitchell, despite his being with her.

As for her own part in this mystery, Cordelia considered herself as entirely outside it, except in so far as it was a problem which she was to solve. Of course this affair meant, in its secret financial aspect, her remaining up in her splendid world in the world where she was going to meet Jerry Plimpton as she had been meeting him.

Also she felt excitement in the adventure; gratification in the exercise of her faculties for succeeding in anything she tried to do. She was going to solve this problem—somehow. No doubt in their also she wished to extricate Gladys, or whoever else might be involved in the mystery. But beyond these considerations, excited and intrigued though she was, Cordelia did not feel herself personally involved in the affair.

Despite all Cordelia's trying to note every look, every inflection of tone, every act of these people, it was not until she had been at Rolling Meadows a week that she gained her first clue to the realities of the situation. Toward 11 o'clock one night she caught a swift questioning look which Gladys gave Esther, and saw Esther's almost imperceptible nod. Instantly Cordelia's every sense was on the alert. She pretended a yawn, said she was going to get a book from the library with which to read herself to sleep. With the book she ascended the main stairway with the tired manner of one to whom a few pages will be an insupportable sleeping potion.

Inside her room she dropped the book, slipped outside again, locked her door, and carefully made her way down the hall toward a little-used stairway in the western wing. Fortune favored her, for she gained the porch unobserved.

Standing in a corner of the porch in the black shadow of thick ivy, not even feeling that she had come with night, Cordelia waited in rigid expectancy. Minutes throbbed by: a half hour; an hour. Then from

the shadows of the house there emerged a vague figure and hurried away to the right, avoiding the path and keeping to the silent lawn. Will mounting tensely Cordelia waited for another shadowy figure to cross the lawn. Minutes passed. But no figure traversed the darkness. And then it came to her that the first person or persons who had been waiting over there in the unknown blackness before she had come out upon the veranda. She delayed no longer, but crept swiftly down the steps and across the lawn.

In her excitement she did not catch the first words; but the voice was Gladys's and it was angry, loud. The first words she really heard were in a man's voice—a cool, steady voice. "Soft pedal your talk a bit, Gladys," said the voice. "You're not using the best sense in the world in crying out like this—and the way you did the other night. The other night you got Miss Marlowe out of bed. I don't mind it so much, but it's not particularly safe for you."

Cordelia almost gasped aloud as she recognized this quiet voice. It had the quality of authority, of assured mastery over those it addressed. It was the voice of Mitchell, the self-effacing, ever-present, soft-toned Mitchell—that perfect butler.

"You don't expect me to take any such talk from you calmly?" exclaimed Gladys, in a lower tone.

A Warning. "You must acquire better control of your nerves, my dear," responded Mitchell. "Though I'm sure your voice has an easy, pleasant, affable quality, I must say that you have lost a lot in the matter of nerves in the last five years. And I must say that you're making things rather absurd when your nerves make it necessary to arrange to slip off to a place like this when a private talk is necessary. Esther—she's the expert control. You should try to copy it, my dear."

"Will you please stop my dearing me?" cried Gladys in exasperation. "I'm tired of it."

"Anything to please you, Gladys. Though I can't give bond for my tongue, it's got a frightful memory." "And another thing," the exasperated Gladys went on. "I want you—and so does Esther—to stop making up to Francis."

"Do you, Esther?" Mitchell inquired. "If Esther made any reply it did not come to Cordelia's ears. "Anyhow—what is behind your always trying to make Francis so fond of you?" Gladys demanded.

"I like the boy, and I like to make him happy, as I have told you. Isn't that reason enough?" "Not reason enough for you?"

"Well, of course there might be other considerations prompting my kindness." His tone was meditative, still pleasant; Cordelia could guess how provoking that pleasant quality was to Gladys. Who knows, I may be thinking of the desirability of some day kidnapping Francis."

"I wouldn't put it beyond you to try?" "Humiliating. "And if I should try, it would make the business very much easier, and less dangerous, now wouldn't it, my dear—beg pardon, Gladys, I forgot I'm talking to you, my dear—much less dangerous, if Francis came along of his own accord because he liked me so much? A neat plan. I rather fancy that plan."

Neither of the two made response to this. "Or who knows, perhaps I am thinking of something else. For example, that I am getting ready to claim him as my own son."

"You wouldn't dare!" burst from Gladys in a choked voice. "Mitchell—you're not a servant about any such claim!" breathed Esther.

Cordelia could not tell whether he was in earnest, or merely taking his pleasure in exercising his power over these two. He responded to neither of them, and went on in his pleasant, meditative tones.

"That last idea is decidedly good. It would make a most convincing and affecting newspaper story. Good enters domestic service in search of son lost in war chaos of France. Releasement proceeds by the instinctive affections between the two—a slightly different version of the ancient Solomon-and-two-mothers stunt. Yes, indeed, most affecting and convincing situation. On the whole I believe I like this plan much better than any I have thought of. It's safer—and there may be much more in it. Yes, when I get good and ready I think I'll claim my son."

"Try that and I'll fight you!" exclaimed Gladys. "Fight me? Oh, will you, Gladys, my dear?" Mitchell said softly. "Now will you? I do wish you'd try that course. It would be most interesting to match evidence with you in court, my dear—most interesting."

Neither of the women spoke. "Yes," said Mitchell, in his soft, meditative tone. "I think I like this plan best. I'll claim Francis as my son."

There was silence for a moment or two. Cordelia was sure that in her tense, nervous state she had rushed the syringe flush. But if so, there was no immediate sign that she had been heard within.

Esther was the next to speak. "Suppose we change the subject and get to the matter Gladys wanted to talk about."

"Just as please the two of you," said Mitchell. "But before getting on to that—Gladys, how about that money you were to give me?"

A Tired Protest. "You've had altogether too much out of me as it is!" "You have given me ever so much more, if I do not mind, for a justly earned the pleasant voice of Mitchell. "Oh, ever and ever so much more, and you know it."

"See here, you listen to what—" Gladys began hotly, but was interrupted by the equable voice of her butler.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)