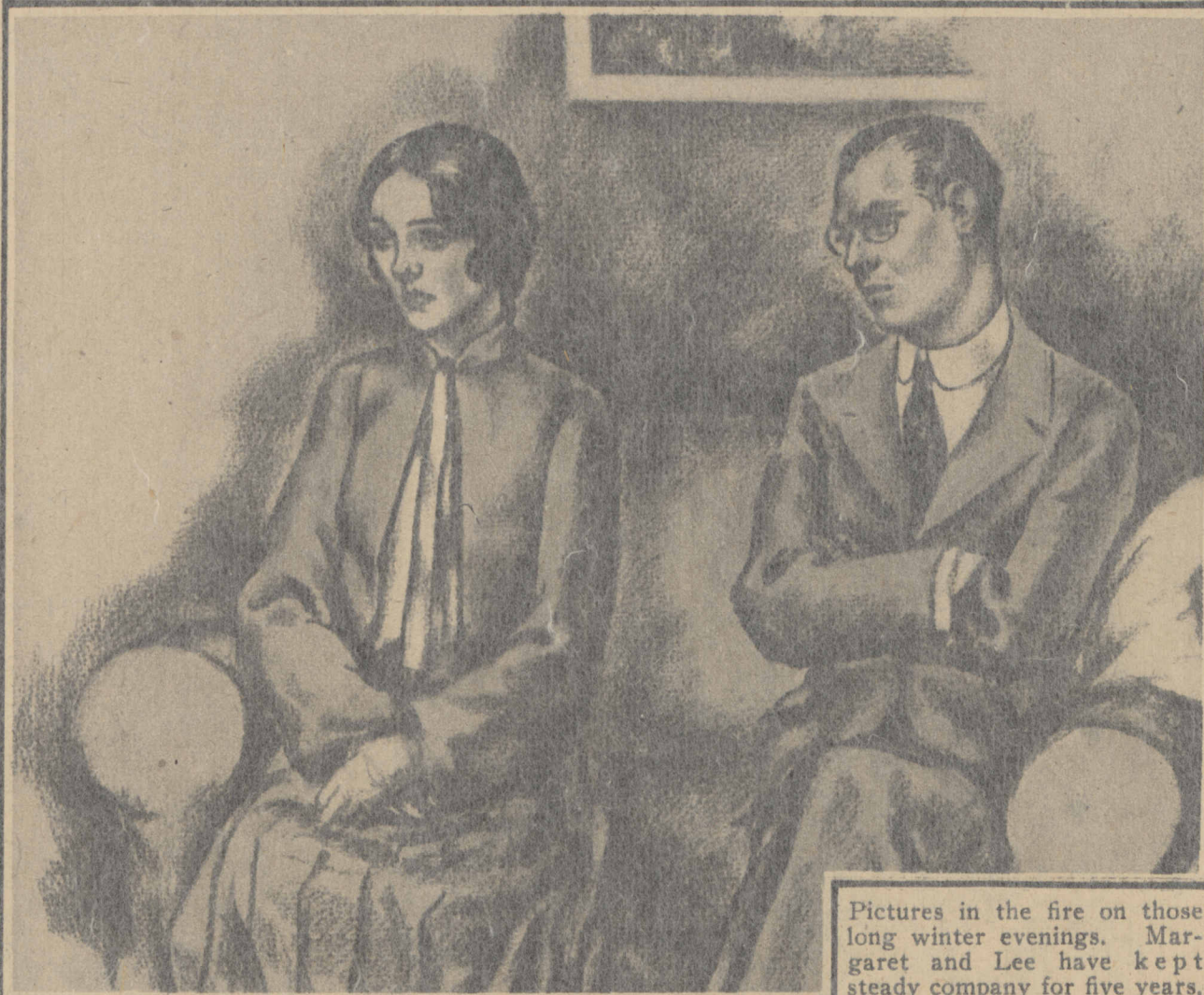


The Long Engagement

By W. E. Hill



Dorothy's fiance loves canoeing and is planning to take Dorothy out on the river as soon as the weather gets better. Dorothy has been reading Mr. Dreiser's "American Tragedy," and the poor little thing is frightened to death. There was a girl in the story who got lured into a canoe, you'll remember.



Pictures in the fire on those long winter evenings. Margaret and Lee have kept steady company for five years, nearly. Lee calls regularly every Tuesday and Thursday evening. Sometimes on a Saturday afternoon they will walk out to the suburbs and look at the bungalows. The understanding is that Margaret can't leave her mother, because her mother won't live alone or with Lee, and Lee's mother feels the same way about things. "Did you speak, Lee?" asks Margaret after a long pause. "No, Margaret," answers Lee; "I just cleared my throat!"



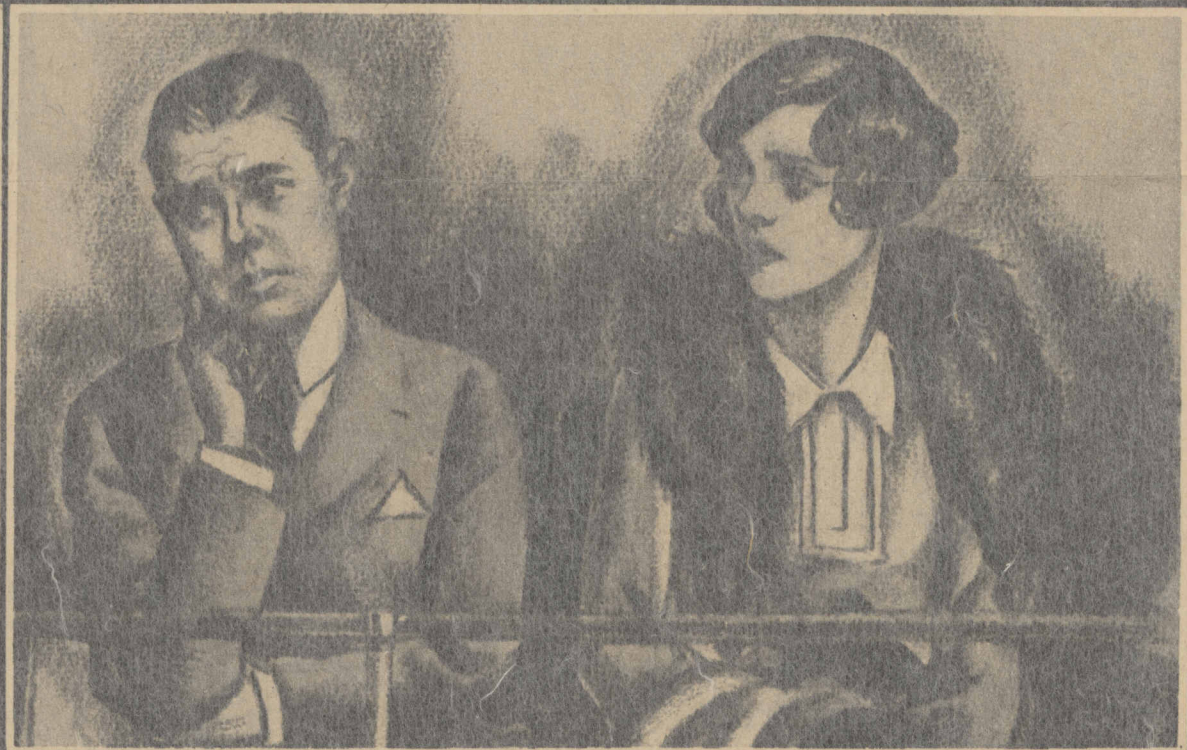
A long engagement is a very trying time for the girl who has promised to wed an intellectual young man. She has to keep up on all the highbrow magazines and look pleasantly interested when he tells her about strikes among the cloak and suit workers, the Near East, and the ups and downs of the franc. After the wedding bells she can let down a bit and ease the mental strain, but not till then.



It seems as if Betty and Joe never will get married. There is a lengthy engagement period filled to overflowing with misunderstandings followed by tears and explanations. Joe is always meeting Betty somewhere she isn't supposed to be and then there's a scene. And Betty is continually hearing that Joe was somewhere with someone he shouldn't have been with, after he had told her he was going home early to bed. The quiet periods are too short to get married in.



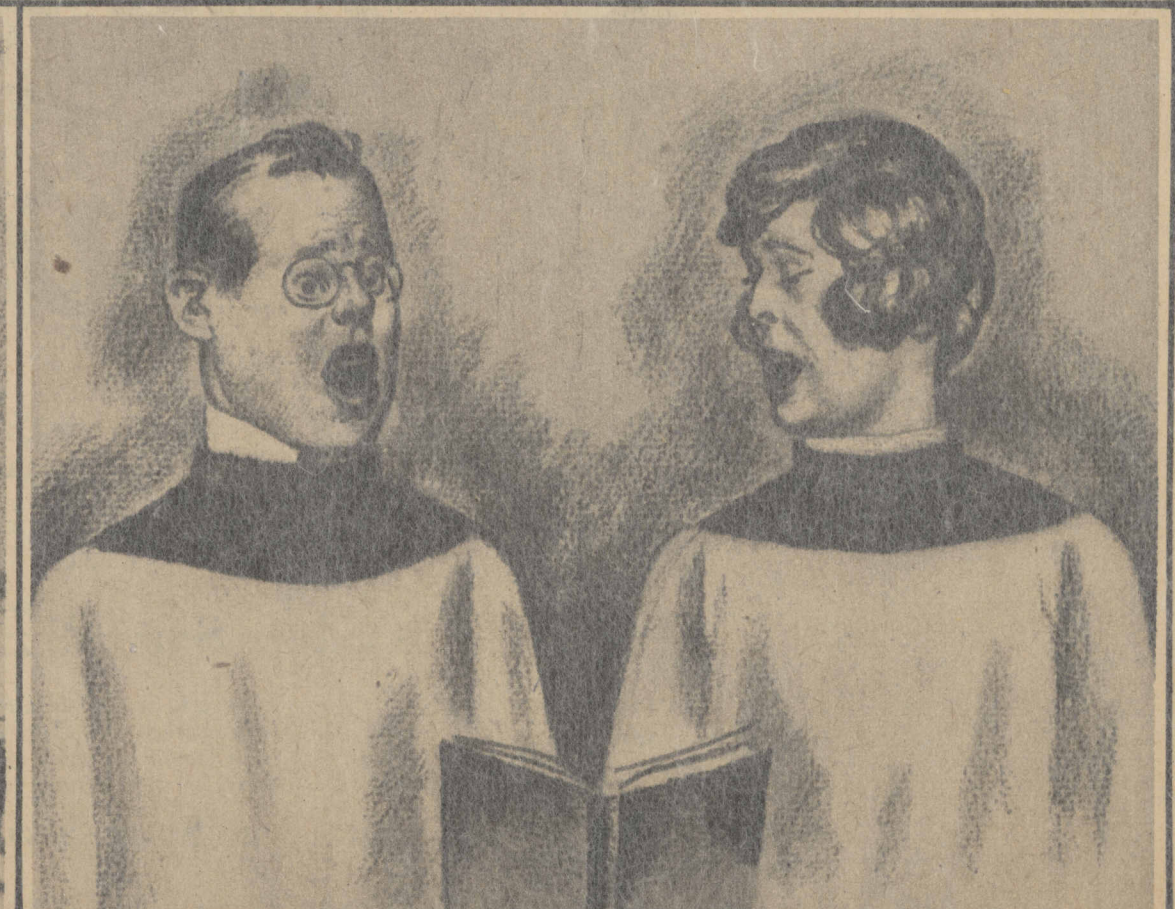
A long engagement is really harder on the young man than it is on his dream girl. Especially those young men who keep house all alone. Here's Arthur, if you please, coming from the toilet goods counter with a jar of cold cream and a bottle of almond lotion. His hands are being ruined by the breakfast dishes he has to wash.



Junior is very Victorian, and Harriet is very modern. They have many differences, and their engagement has been broken and patched up over a dozen times. They are at one of those daring sex plays, one of those big, vital, daring themes that the police are always looking at askance. Harriet is thrilled. Junior is blushing and blanching in turn. On the way home they will have another difference of opinion. "O, Junior," Harriet will say, "how can I marry a man who's always ignoring the big vital truths!"



Edith and Ed have been engaged for going on a year now. Ed is waiting for his raise. Meantime the wear and tear on the overhead has started Ed's hair coming out in perfect handfuls, and Edith is terribly worried about it. Ed is one of those big blustery fellows, "just all boy," and you can imagine what a time Edith has had enticing him to Mme. Ada's beauty parlor for scalp treatment. "Lots of men come here," Mme. Ada is explaining; "right now we're putting water waves on six of the boys from the 'Chase Me, Charlie,' company!"



Fred Maul and Clara Sodaberg have sung in the choir for years, and despite the rumors during the dull season nothing seems to happen. That is, nothing definite. There must be some sort of understanding between them, however, for Fred was seen going into a real estate office not long ago, and old Mrs. Klaus surprised Clara sewing on something she hid right away.