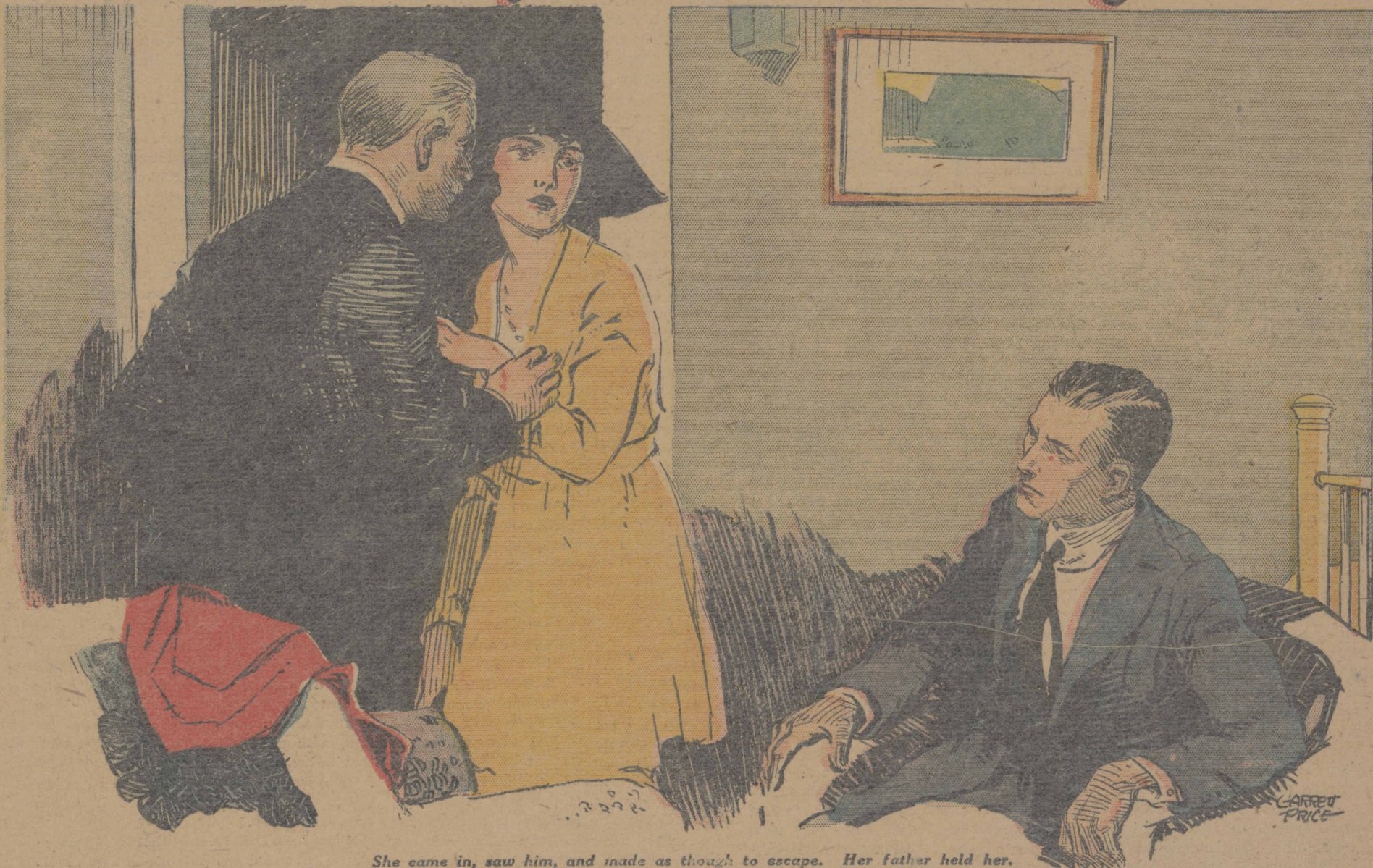




OCTOBER 17, 1920



IRONICS by Holworthy Hall



She came in, saw him, and made as though to escape. Her father held her.

WHEN Burgess was 24 he inherited his father's business, and when he was 29 he turned it over to his creditors, lock, stock, and barrel, and went wearily down to Pinehurst for the tonic of winter golf. Each winter for the last five years he had promised himself this needed respite; but it was only now, after his career had definitely been ruined, that he felt able to afford the luxury.

The irony of the situation didn't escape him. For the last five years he had paid himself a living salary, but the business had permitted no vacations, so that out of sheer necessity he had glued his soul to the surface of an office desk. He had done without diversion, without companionship, without mental or physical refreshment. The failure of his prospects had released the calendar, but it had also lopped off his income. His assets amounted to perhaps a thousand dollars, plus his wardrobe, but the liabilities had ceased to gibber at him in the night; and with the books so balanced he felt rich enough to afford whatever he wanted.

What he wanted was Pinehurst. He wanted to live at ease, like a gentleman, up to the very danger line of his resources; he wanted to play golf, and wash his brain clear of the commercial grime which had settled upon it; he wanted to lose all active memory of the surging impetus which had first made a machine out of him, and then stopped barely short of wrecking the machine. And, finally, he wanted a return of youth—youth unhampered and undistressed and careless of the immaterial future. For all this fine variety of mercies, as compensation for half a decade of battling against the impossible, he was willing to pay out the uttermost cent he owned; and he knew in his heart that he was making a good investment.

It was a consolation to him, as he dressed for dinner on the first evening, to realize that his wardrobe was in good condition. Otherwise the period of his holiday would inevitably have been less. Translating the current prices of clothes and haberdashery into terms of hotel bills, he perceived that a new golf suit, for example, would have cost him an entire precious week-out of the sun total. A new dinner coat, in the mode, would have nibbled away another fortnight. Even

Ned Burgess, Manufacturer, Learns a Thing or Two About Girls, Finance, and Fathers-in-Law

a few ties, or a pair of shoes, or a fashionable waistcoat, would have meant the sacrifice of at least a day. He smiled at the mirror and gave congratulations to his image there; his wardrobe was limited, but it was quite sufficient, and in detail it was faultless.

He dined alone and was still too tired and too distracted by misfortune to wish for company, but later, when he smoked his cigaret in the lobby, he began to be somewhat conscious of his isolation. So far he had made no acquaintances and met none, and this was not in accordance with his visionings. To be sure there had already been a chance or two to enter into conversation with older men, but Burgess had specialized for five solid years in the society of the elder generation, and he wasn't drawn towards it now. This was to be his long delayed and long sufficing interlude of youth. And young people were all about him, and directly across the room there was a girl worth looking at.

As he viewed her he was stirred by the realization that no matter how ancient he felt he was really 29. The mere sight of her carried him back towards normal, because she was the very apotheosis of the state of mind he wanted to regain. She was the living spirit of the youth he had lost; she was outwardly charming, and she had the sweetest manner in the world.

He told himself, judicially, that life must have treated her with consistent kindness, for she was palpably endowed with all that youth requires to make it radiant. Even more—she had intelligence, as well. Glancing at her occasionally, he checked off other attributes. Humor, poise, kindness, sympathy—all these he detected at long range,

merely from her swift-changing expressions. He decided, with that sober impulsiveness which springs so often from a tired will, that he shouldn't be contented in Pinehurst until he met her.

This circumstance was nearer to him than he supposed, for it happened that the last expression of hers he had noted—the flash of sympathy—had to do with himself. She had just applied to him the adjective "distinguished," and added that she had rarely seen a man whose loneliness was so apparent. And her companion looked across at Burgess, stared hard, wrinkled his brows, suddenly gave an exclamation, said, "Pardon me a second!" and was on the way.

Burgess saw him coming, recognized the purpose, if not the man, and rose. He was 6 feet tall and straight as a pine tree.

"Look here, aren't you Ned Burgess?"

"Right. I ought to recognize you—your face is mighty familiar, but—"

"Southwick. I played opposite you at New Haven eight years ago last fall."

Burgess' grip, which had been merely formal, became conclusive.

"Of course! Southwick, I certainly am glad to see you."

"Well, I'm mighty glad to see you. There was a time when I wouldn't have been, though." Southwick laughed good naturedly. What you did to me that day put me in the hospital for a week and kicked me out of the captaincy next season. Still, if you've got to be smeared, why, it feels a little better to have it done by somebody on the All-American. . . . Down for the rest of the season, are you? How's your game?"

"Rotten. No, I'm down for just a few weeks. Do you stay on through?"

"I live here all winter. . . . Say, do you know any of these people? No? Well, don't hug the wall, then; come on over and be introduced." He took Burgess cordially by the arm. "I don't mind telling you that you've got all the flappers worried silly."

"Worried? How so?"

"For fear you aren't going to stay."

It was a revelation to Burgess that he could find such pleasure in the blatant flattery. He told himself twice during his brief pilgrimage across the lobby that he was a fool to go out of his class. He had nothing in common with young people, including those of his own age, and he was sure to bore them and spoil his illusions. Nevertheless he was aware of a curious sense of exhilaration as he brought up before the girl who had attracted his attention.

In an instant he saw that he had cleverly appraised her. She was all that he had pictured her, and something more; she came perilously close to his ideal. He knew, as she raised her eyes, that she lived largely behind them—that she didn't allow the world to share as many of her thoughts and emotions as the world fancied it did. Her whole attitude was friendly, ingenuous, and yet the least bit reticent; Burgess liked it. He liked the moulding of her features and the independent tilt of her chin. He liked the velvet of her gown—burgundy was his guess for color. He liked everything about her.

Southwick was presenting him. "Miss Robinson, here's the man I've envied more than anybody else I can think of. His name's Burgess. He's sat on my neck on every square inch of Yale field."

Miss Robinson laughed, and so did Burgess; it was a good beginning.

"I'm envying him, in turn, for the privilege of living here all winter."

"O, don't do that," she said. "You'll destroy all the value of my lectures."

Southwick made a gesture of mock dismay. "Help!" he said. "S. O. S. Some other subject. Talk about the weather, Burgess. Ask her for a dance. Anything but lectures! I've got a weak mind, and I can't stand it!"

Burgess was showing the slightly forced smile of incomprehension. "Mr. Southwick

CONTENTS OF THIS SECTION

IRONICS,
a love story, by Holworthy Hall.
RESULTS ARE WHAT COUNT,
a comedy of errors in salesmanship,
by Oney Fred Sweet.
WEST WIND DRIFT,
a serial, by George Barr McCutcheon.
THE TEENIE WEENIES,
by William Donahey.

NEXT WEEK
THE STRANGE CASE OF JESSAMINE
LYND, a Blue Ribbon short story, by
C. N. and A. M. Williamson.