



## SECOND INSTALLMENT

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR  
Tom Bilbeck is the narrator. He is a fat newspaper writer who drives a tumbledown car he calls Grandmother Page. He is in love with Maryella, his rival being Jim Cooper. The three are members of an amateur dramatic group. Plans for a play at the Old Soldiers' home are under way. Grandmother Page has engine trouble while Maryella is out driving with Bilbeck, and Cooper, passing in a big roadster, taunts him. After Maryella has left Bilbeck is able to start his car again.

### CHAPTER II REHEARSAL

Our version of "Pygmalion and Galatea" would doubtless surprise you if you are at all familiar with the original, in which *Pygmalion* is the artist and carves the lady in the sketch out of a block of marble.

We started out to rehearse it that way, but ran into difficulties when the matter of costumes came up for discussion. It seemed advisable that the statue should wear white tights and white grease-paint on the face in order to carry out the illusion. All the ladies of the club were quite content that it should be so, but when it came to assigning the parts each and every one refused to be *Galatea*.

For a time it looked as if we should have to fall back on some little sketch of Shakespeare's until Maryella made the practical suggestion that we change the story. Her idea was to make *Galatea* a sculptorine who hammers a hunk of stone into a beautiful male statue by the name of *Pygmalion*.

Can you imagine an anti-feminist thinking up a thought like that?

Maryella's suggestion carried. As the literary man of the organization, I was appointed to doctor up the manuscript to fit the change of characters. Later, much to my surprise and in spite of my protests, the stellar role of *Pygmalion* was forced upon me.

Tonight was to be the dress rehearsal and on the following evening we were scheduled to give a trial performance in the barn at the Old Soldiers' home. The trial performance was for the double purpose of getting easy in our parts and of making the old soldiers realize that war is not so terrible after all.

When I returned to my bachelor rooms in town I had only time to change to some dry clothing and hurry over to the rehearsal without getting anything to eat. Food did not appeal to me anyway. Neither did anything else least of all rehearsing a lot of fool love-talk. My own romance had suffered such a disheartening set-back that I was in no mood to enact the role of a hand-hammered *Romeo* of mythology.

But I went just the same. You know how hard it is to step out of the routine business of your life just because some disaster has befallen you. Your

perceptions become numbed and you wonder vaguely why the sun is shining, but you go on doing the things that are expected of you just as you have always done.

"Business as usual" is not the motto of an exceptional nation. It is the underlying principle of the progress of the human race.

The Sheridan Dramatic club had borrowed for rehearsals the stage of the local opera-house, which was vacant that week. It was there that I wended my disconsolate way.

I was late, but it didn't make much difference, as all during the first act the statue of *Pygmalion* was a *papier-mache* figure. Between the acts I was



The Statue With Bow Legs!

supposed to take the place of the statue in the same pose so that a little later I could come to life in response to *Galatea's* wish.

When I came in they were rehearsing with the dummy. Everything appeared to be going very well. Maryella looked absolutely ravishing in the Greek drapery, and Jim Cooper was doing the best he could to impersonate a skinny Greed varrior.

He was even thinner than I had suspected. As a Highlander he would never be a conspicuous success. Any one could tell that at a glance.

The part of a young sculptor's apprentice was taken by Mrs. Hemmingway, a dazzling blond who was worth going miles to behold in a short tunic and sandals. She wouldn't have fooled any one but a blind man into thinking she was a boy, nobody

mind that. She had talents enough to get into a Ziegfeld chorus any day.

There were a dozen other parts played with intent to kill in the good old amateur way. I discovered former male friends hidden behind bushy beards that dropped off occasionally at a critical moment, leaving the actor bald-faced and speechless; and ladies I used to know disguised as Hellenic maidens by doing their hair into a Phrygian knot and trimming their best nighties with a Greek key-design and an occasional swastika.

Off stage, doing a piece of embroidery while she waited for her cue, was Mrs. George P. Lillielove, the wife of the most popular undertaker in town. In Greek robes Mrs. Lillielove looked almost exactly like a haystack with a tarpaulin over it.

I slipped into my dressing-room unobserved. My costume was there. I had not seen it before, so I was a trifle surprised at the bulk of it. The whole thing could have been put in the pocket of a dress waistcoat without spoiling the shape of it any. It was silk and white, but it seemed awfully thin, I played safe by wearing my underwear beneath it.

There was no full-length mirror in my room, so I could not get the entire effect, but it looked all right as far as I could see. It was easy to make up my face all white and put

on a white wig which was provided for me. I slipped on my overcoat over the costume to step up on the stage.

The curtain was down between the acts. I took my place on the pedestal, slightly nervous but determined to get through somehow if the seams of the tights did their part. The stage was dimly illumined with blue moonlight. Just before the curtain rose I dropped the overcoat behind me.

I stood motionless during the introductory music. There was a flutter of surprise among the members of the club who were not on the stage at that moment and had stepped out into the auditorium to steal a look from the other side of the footlights. It must have been beautiful. I know I was conscious of looking well in that pose and lighting. I

flexed my muscles to make them stand out better.

*Galatea* entered. She was dressed in a gold-trimmed robe. On her neck was a single strand of beautiful pearls. I recognized them as Mrs. Hemmingway's. Maryella had borrowed them because their owner couldn't wear them for the performance, as she was playing the part of a boy.

*Galatea's* eyes were on the floor, pensive. She came slowly to the pedestal on which I stood. She knelt. She looked up.

She held her pose for a long time without saying a word—without expressing even a whispered wish that I would come to life. Maryella was wordless.

"What's the trouble?" inquired the coach, who stood, book in hand, just over the footlights. "Miss Waite, your line is, 'My dearest wish—'"

"No," she stopped him impatiently. "I know my lines. It's the statue."

Her tone was full of vexation. "What's the matter?" I inquired, without abandoning my attitude. "This is the same pose I've been taking every night at rehearsal ever since we began."

"It isn't that. You are bow-legged." She spoke accusingly, as if I had made a blunder of some sort on purpose.

"Oh!" That was a sensitive subject with me.

"I didn't know there was anything criminal in being slightly curved. It really comes from strength. Lots of men are."

"But no one ever saw a bow-legged statue before," she argued petulantly. "I don't care personally. I suppose that lots of really estimable men have personal peculiarities; but can you imagine a sculptor creating a statue intentionally bow-legged? Why didn't you tell me?" she wailed.

"Why didn't you tell me?" "Well," I temporized, "I didn't think I knew you well enough for that."

"The play is ruined," she declared. "Not at all," I said with as much injured dignity as I could command in white tights. "You can easily get some one else to play this part. If you look around the club you can doubtless find someone with legs like bean-poles."

She knew whom I meant without my explaining more particularly.

"Come, people," interrupted the coach pleasantly. "We mustn't waste time. Remember there is a lot to do before we leave here this evening."

"Don't be silly," she replied. "No one else could learn the part in time."

"Why not try standing sideways to the audience all the time," suggested Jim Cooper, who with his nose-glasses on and cigarette in his mouth was the beau ideal of a Greek warrior.

"I know what to do." Mrs. Hemmingway came to the rescue with a practical suggestion.

"You can buy a pair of those things that chorus girls wear sometimes—symmetricals, I think they are called."

"No, I don't wear them myself," she assured them in response to the unspoken question, "but I've heard that there are such things."

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