Just Five Minutes

By HELEN LANGWORTHY

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OFFICER O'DAY looked puzzled when a sleek town car slid to a stop in front of the Martin Jewelry company and the chauffeur sat woodenly indifferent while the car's other occupant fumbled with the door handle. Officer O'Day took huge steps across the sidewalk to open the door himself.

An attractive young woman met his glance with startled eyes and a quick flush.

"Thank you so much," she murmured.

The store was deserted except for Mr. Martin and the bookkeeper bent over a ledger. Mr. Martin hurried forward to wait upon the woman.

"I'd like to see some diamond rings," she said.

Mr. Martin glanced at the woman curiously. So many of his patrons nowadays were likely to wear just slightly shabby clothes. He noticed that this customer's fashionable tan coat and hat looked new, and expensive. Even the matching parasol with it's carved handle appeared unused. Whereupon Mr. Martin placed his most expensive stock of diamonds on the counter.

A happy smile lit up the woman's face as she selected a ring with perhaps the largest stone of the display. She tried it on.

"You know," she confided in a husky voice, "I made some money, a wise investment, and I decided I'd earned a diamond."

"An excellent idea; excellent," Mr. Martin said, trying to appear nonchalant. She raised her hand to see the diamond closely. At that instant the loop of the parasol slid off her arm and it hit the floor with a muffled thud. Quickly the woman bent to retrieve it.

"These other rings," she said, "I wonder if I might care for one of them."

A worried frown came to Mr. Martin's face. He wanted desperately to sell the large diamond. With anxious eyes he watched her finger the less expensive diamonds one after another. Mr. Martin would have been more concerned had he been able to see the other side of the counter.

Slowly, very carefully, the woman's left hand slid down the handle of her parasol, down to the framework, and dropped the big diamond among the folds.

The instant that it dropped the woman slid the other rings into a small pile.

"After all," she said, with a straightforward smile, "I don't know which I like best." She pulled on her gloves. "I'll return in an hour or two, when I have decided."

That had been almost too easy, she thought. There had been a question in her mind whether she could place the diamonds in a pile. But now!—five more precious minutes. She walked slowly a few feet. Confidence now, nothing could go wrong. Jim out there, taut, ready to speed away.

Mr. Martin kept pace with her on his side of the counter.

The woman stopped short when she saw a display of beaded bags. "Oh, aren't they adorable?" Instantly Mr. Martin was placing a half dozen on the counter.

Glancing at her tiny jeweled wrist watch the woman said doubtfully, "I really shouldn't." Jim out there in the car would be fuming with nervousness. They had planned that she would take no longer than fifteen minutes. The motor would be running, they would drive quickly a few blocks into a certain garage. Their clothing was laid out. She knew too that even as they donned the clothes that would so change their appearance, the men in the garage would be rushing through the paint job that would make the big car unrecognizable.

But what of five minutes and Jim's uneasiness, the woman thought contemptuously. Leisurely she opened the bags, compared them. There was one, a rich dark one that she seemed to prefer. When she turned away from the counter it lay at the bottom of her parasol.

She heard herself murmur things—no, not today after all. Once more she glanced at her watch. Slightly more than five minutes had elapsed while she had examined the bags. Her heart beat a little faster.

But still she talked pleasantly to Mr. Martin as she walked to the door, and then, involuntarily, she took a deep breath.

"Nice little rain," Mr. Martin said behind her.

Nice little rain!

She hesitated with the door partly open when Officer O'Day came into view. He was smiling broadly. "Just an April shower, only started five minutes ago," he said and then reached for her parasol. "Allow me—"

"No, oh, no," the woman said and her voice sounded strangely excited. "It doesn't work," she explained quickly.

Patrick O'Day would never have it known that as little a thing as a lady's parasol ever refused to yield to him.

"Oh, I can fix it," he said confidently and pulled the parasol from the woman's conclusive grip.

With nightmarish clarity, the woman beheld several scenes the next instant: Patrick O'Day raising the parasol, peering at it. Then the dull thud of a beaded bag as it hit the sidewalk and the lighter tinkle of a diamond ring as it bounded into the gutter. That amazed expression on the officer's face; Mr. Martin yelling hoarsely and Jim, the rat, pulling away from the curb, roaring down the street, alone!

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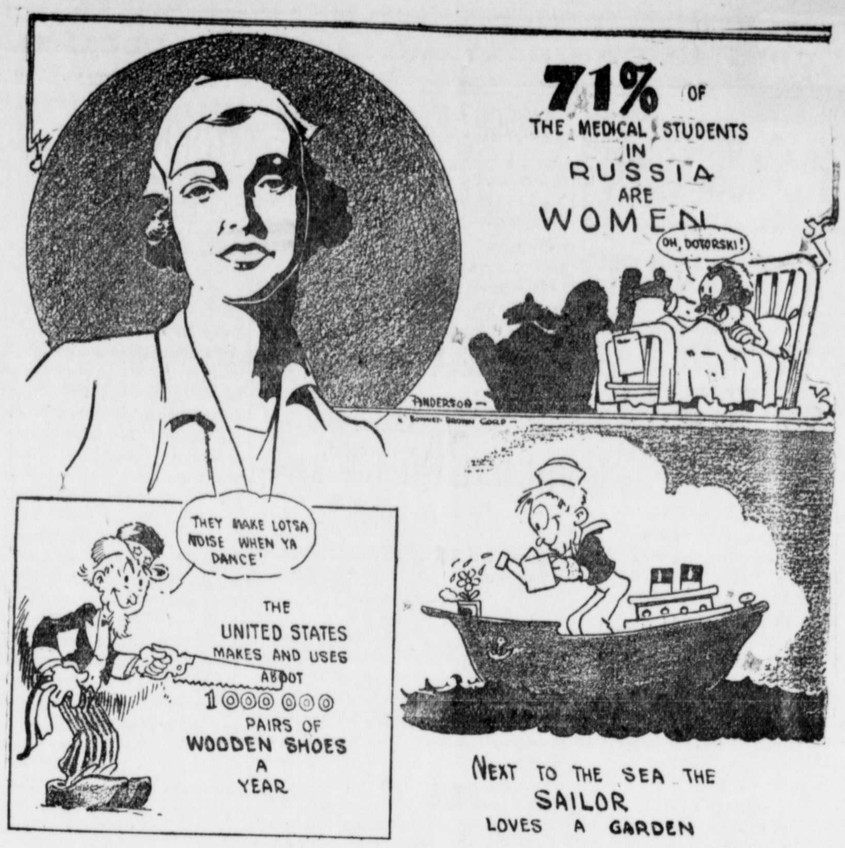
Substantial gains in telephones are reported for the associated Bell System Companies for the first three-quarters of the year. President Walter S. Gifford of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company in addressing the stockholders on October 15 said that during the third quarter of this year the Bell System had a net gain of about 37,000 telephones as compared with a net loss of 50,000 telephones in the corresponding period of last year. The net gain since the first of the year has been about 226,000.

The number of toll and long distance calls during the third quarter was about two and one-half per cent greater than in the same period last year. For the nine months the increase was about five per cent over the corresponding period of 1933.

Treating the system as a whole and including the Western Electric Company, preliminary data indicate earnings on American Telephone and Telegraph Company stock of about $4.32 per share for the first nine months of this year compared with $3.89 per share for the corresponding period of 1933.

The earnings of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company by itself do not reflect the current deficit of the Western Electric Company, and about 10 cents per share of the earnings for 1934 and 90 cents for 1933 are accounted for by dividends received that were not earned during the nine-month period by the associated companies as a whole.

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