

# "Too Collegiate"

By Lucian Cary

*A tennis player's slump may be caused by soft-shelled crabs—or by a girl. Either may be extremely serious*



He lifted the candle high and she almost jumped when she saw his face

**J**OE GARNER went into a slump just before the Davis Cup matches. He was counted on to beat Perochet that year and he went into a slump.

The Davis Cup committee held a meeting, as Davis Cup committees do, and decided that something had to be done about Joe and done quick. As Harry Tutbill said, the first thing was to find out what was the matter.

They took Joe out to dinner and gave him highballs and pried and pried, hoping they would turn up something that was worrying him. But he wasn't in debt and he hadn't quarreled with anybody and he slept well and he had a good appetite. The next morning, playing Andy at Forest Hills, he was worse than ever. He was exasperated with the ball, which now defied him; he was exasperated with the committee, who wouldn't let him alone; and most of all, of course, he was exasperated with the mystery.

Colonel Hostetter couldn't stand it any longer. He called out to Joe and Andy to stop play. They walked slowly over to where the Colonel stood with Harry Tutbill.

"Joe," the Colonel said, "you have no idea what the trouble is?"

Joe shook his head. He hadn't the least idea.

"There's only one answer," the Colonel continued. They looked at the Colonel apprehensively. They knew what he was going to say. They had all thought of it and shrunk from saying it. "You're over-tennis," the Colonel finished. "You've gone stale."

Joe bounced and caught the ball he had been holding in his hand; bounced and caught it again and again. Andy Graham searched for a stem of grass to chew. Harry Tutbill took out a fresh cigarette and lit it. The Colonel stood there looking as grim as if he were about to order another charge of the Light Brigade—into the Valley of Death. There is but one remedy for a man who's over-tennis.

"**Y**OU go and get a shower," the Colonel said to Joe. "You go and get a shower and dress and take your car and go somewhere. You go some place where they never heard of tennis and you won't see a tennis racquet or a tennis fan. Don't see tennis, don't talk tennis, don't think tennis. Then you come back here day after tomorrow and play Perochet."

"All right, Colonel," Joe Garner said. "I'll go away."

"It's our only chance, Joe."

Joe nodded. Andy Graham said nothing. He said nothing until Joe was dressed and ready to leave. He was the last to shake hands with Joe and after he had shaken hands with Joe he stood there a minute chewing a stem of grass.

"Mr. Garner," Andy said softly, "you've got something on your mind. Get it off."

Joe nodded gravely, not wishing to argue the subject with Andy.

"Listen, Mr. Garner," Andy said earnestly. "When you get by yourself—think what you would like to do most. I don't mean think hard—I mean let your mind sort of drift until you come to something you'd like to do. Then do it."

"All right, Andy," Joe promised, "I'll try that."

Joe drove over the Queensboro Bridge and into Fifth Avenue. Outwardly he occupied himself with dodging other cars, as one must on Manhattan Island, but inwardly his mind must have gone on working because he presently found himself in Fifty-ninth Street, opposite the Plaza. It was nearly three o'clock and he'd had no lunch. He was hungry. So he parked his roadster and went into the grill and ordered the first thing that came into his head, which happened to be soft-shelled crabs.

Eating the dish reminded him of how fond Sylvia Thomas was of soft-shelled crabs. He was a little startled to remember that it was at this very table in the corner that Sylvia had thrown him down. That was seven months ago. He hadn't seen her since.

**B**UT he had seen her since. He had seen her only ten days back, coming out of the Marguery after dinner with Bill Winkler. He had stopped short so they wouldn't see him. They had got into a taxi and as the taxi started off he saw Bill Winkler kiss her. He could see their heads plainly, framed in the back window of the cab.

He had been ironically amused at the time. Sylvia had turned him down cold on the ground that she couldn't take him seriously. She had said he was a perennial college boy who never had a thought above tennis. And now she was playing around with Bill Winkler, who had never had a thought at all.

Joe remembered how incredulous he had been when Sylvia had turned him down. He had been incredulous because she had led him on. And when he had got it through his head that she was throwing him down he had been sunk. He had saved himself by going off to Havana. He had played at Havana and Miami and Augusta and Mexico and St. Louis and Kansas City and Wimbledon and Auteuil and Longwood and Southampton and Sea Girt. He had played tennis five hours a day ever since, and he had gotten over Sylvia.

But now it occurred to him that he had a right to be sore. He had a right to tell Sylvia Thomas what he thought of her. And he jumped up and went to look for a telephone. He knew what he wanted to do. He wanted to tell Sylvia Thomas what was what. He didn't know where she was but he would telephone until he found somebody who did know.

It was more trouble than he anticipated but he found out. She was staying at the Wordens', in the Berkshires. Bill looked at his watch. It was four o'clock. He could drive it in six or seven hours. He could get there before midnight. And he knew the Wordens well enough to invite himself. He would simply send the Wordens a telegram saying he was driving up.

Joe started out. By five o'clock he was beginning to get clear of city traffic. By six o'clock he was approaching Danbury. For two hours he rolled casually along at thirty miles an hour, up hill and down hill, through the peaceful, park-like Connecticut countryside, past enormous old houses in the Colonial manner, through sleepy villages with wide avenues of elms.



He lost his exasperation. He was lulled by the easy motion, by the purr of the motor, by the green hills. He stopped for gas toward eight o'clock. The man at the gas station had a phonograph going. It was playing a song from "Show Boat." It was playing "Why Do I Love You?"

Joe Garner listened to the song while the man put the gas in his car:

"Why do you love me?  
Why do I love you?  
Can you see the why or wherefore  
I should be the one you care for?  
You're a lucky boy  
I am lucky too. . . ."

The words weren't so much. But he couldn't help listening to the music. When he listened to that song, to that tune he and Sylvia had danced to so many times, he felt homesick.

The gas station man interrupted his reverie.

"Look at that sky," he said.

JOE looked and realized that the sky was prematurely darkened by masses of black clouds. The wind was coming up too, fresh and strong. The tops of the trees were bending.

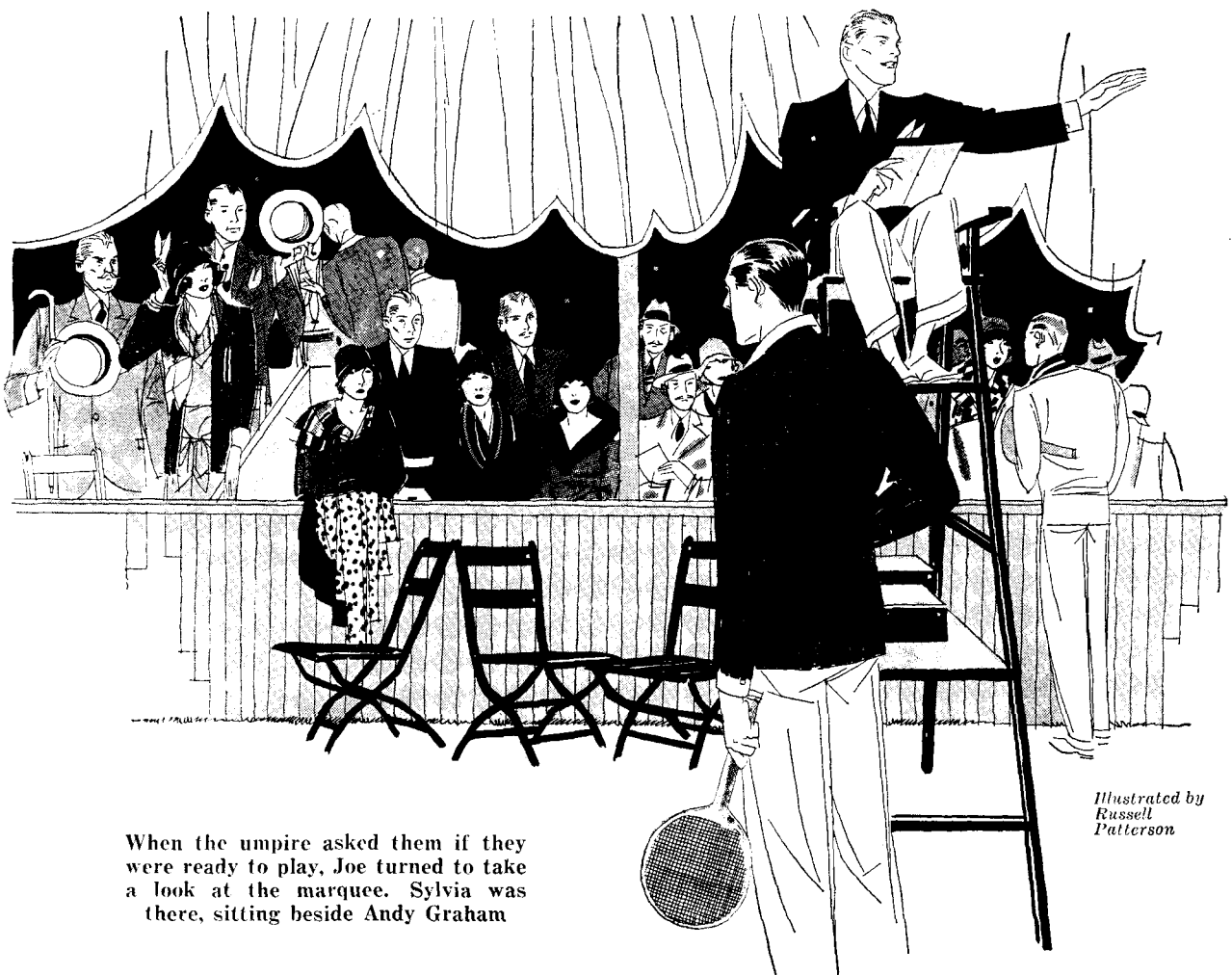
"I'd put my top up if I was you," the gas station man said.

Joe agreed with him.

He drove on and on through the rain, mile after mile, and hour after hour. He drove miles past Pittsfield before he realized that he had missed the turn to the Wordens' place. He went back, found the turn, and took to a country road so slippery with mud that he could hardly stay on it. He slid down into a valley, he climbed a long hill in first speed, the wheels spinning; he started down again—slid down the hill and across the bridge over the brook beside the Wordens' house. The brook was already running over the planks. The house was dark. He hadn't realized how hard it was raining until he jumped out of the car and ran for the front door. It was like plunging into solid water. He was wet through in ten yards.

The front door was locked. He shook the door impatiently. It was hardly possible that everyone had gone to bed, but no lights appeared. He made a dash for the side door. That was locked too. He shook the door hard, but still no lights appeared. He shouted and then he realized that he couldn't make his voice heard inside the house even if someone were awake and listening for it. The roar of the storm through the trees would have drowned a dozen voices.

Joe Garner made a dash for the kitchen door. That was locked. He ran back to his car and got a flashlight out of the door pocket, and hunted for an



When the umpire asked them if they were ready to play, Joe turned to take a look at the marquee. Sylvia was there, sitting beside Andy Graham

open window. He walked clear around the house, but every window was shut and locked.

He saw by the light of the flash that a rose-trellis led from the ground to a veranda roof. There was a window. He put the flash in his pocket and climbed the trellis to the roof.

HE WAS so wet that the water was sloshing in his shoes. He reached the window and put the tips of his fingers under the top rail of the lower sash and endeavored to raise it. The window was locked. He examined the window in the light of the flash. He could see that it was held by a catch in the middle. He smashed a pane with the butt of the flashlight. He reached in and unfastened the catch. The window came up easily, and he stepped into the room.

As he did so, the flash went out. He pressed the button repeatedly, but it would not light. The bulb was gone. He stood there in the warm dark, hunting for matches in his pockets.

While he stood fumbling the door opened. A girl in pajamas, with a lighted candle in one hand and a revolver in the other, stood facing him.

"Hands up!" she said sharply.

Joe Garner half raised his hands. The girl lifted the candle high to throw the light on his face. She almost jumped when she saw his face. She almost jumped and the revolver dropped out of her hand and thumped on the floor. But she recovered herself instantly. When she spoke her voice was under control, and she emphasized what she said with a little disappointed droop of her shoulders.

"It would have to be you," she said wearily.

Joe Garner could have slapped her. "What do you mean by that?"

"Oh," she said, "when a girl hears a man breaking into the house, I suppose she always has a kind of hope it will be somebody she would like to meet."

Joe Garner looked at her and he could not help but feel how good she was to

look at. Her black hair was tousled. Any other girl whose hair was tousled would look like the devil. But tousled black hair became Sylvia. Her eyebrows were as black as her hair and almost straight. People were always praising arched eyebrows. But only people who had not seen Sylvia's straight ones. She was slim, and without high heels she looked small. She looked exactly right. The sleeveless tunic of her pajamas had slipped off one shoulder a little. Joe Garner thought her shoulder was like alabaster and then he thought that was only what some poetic bird had said about a woman's shoulder. Sylvia's shoulder was tanned the most delicate golden color. And rounded.

"Well?" she said. She said it so it sounded like a slap in the face.

"I was thinking that I was glad to meet you again," Joe Garner said. "I can't see that you have changed at all. And I guess I haven't either. Because I think you're just as lovely as ever—and just as poison mean."

"I'm not mean," Sylvia said. "I'm only frank. I don't see any use in pretending. What's the use of pretending I'm glad to see you?"

"No use," Joe Garner said, "no use at all. I'm not pretending either. I'm merely observing how utterly lovely you are to look at."

Sylvia drew in her breath sharply. But she suppressed the word she was about to speak. She looked him up and down with a slight lift of her eyebrows.

"Collegiate to the last," she said.

"No," Joe Garner said, "not collegiate. Only incurably romantic about you."

She shook her head slowly. "I'm sorry you think you're romantic," she said. "You don't look romantic. You look like something somebody has just pulled out of the brook. I wish you would stop talking and go to bed. It isn't good for you to stand around in wet clothes. You might catch cold and then what chance would America have to hold the Davis Cup?"

"At the present moment," Joe Garner remarked, "I do not give one small damn whether we keep the Davis Cup or not. I have something else on my mind. I am puzzled."

Sylvia Thomas nodded gravely.

"Yes," she said, "yes, you must be puzzled. It must be a very puzzling experience for you to have anything on your mind except tennis."

"What puzzles me," he confided, "is the fact that you have it in for me still. You turned me down seven months ago and I haven't bothered you since and you're sore. That means something. I can't quite dope out what it means. But—"

"I'm merely so bored with you that I could scream," Sylvia cried.

"I see you are," Joe Garner said. "I'm beginning to understand. There's something about me that sets you off into yells of rage."

"No," she said, "not at all. Actually I'm indifferent to you. Completely and absolutely indifferent."

"YOU have such violent ways of expressing your indifference, Sylvia," Joe Garner said. "It's confusing."

"My dear boy," Sylvia said coldly, "you forget the circumstances. I was sound asleep when I heard you trying to break into this house. I heard you smash the window. I was all alone in the house. Naturally I was frightened, I couldn't believe it was a burglar and yet what else could I believe? So I got the revolver. Can't you imagine how annoying it is to be waked up in the middle of the night by a second-story worker?"

Joe Garner looked at her and he thought that her story didn't quite ring true. He didn't know what she was concealing but he knew she was concealing something.

"Look here, Sylvia," he said, "where are the Wordens?"

"They went to Albany on the noon train yesterday to some duty thing or other. They'll be back tomorrow."

"So they (Continued on page 46)



# Good Clean Fun

*Whatever did we do to amuse ourselves before we had movies and radios and automobiles? Just give a glance, brothers, just give a glance.*

*All pictures from  
Culver Service*

Right: The timid Ermytrude on the left is getting used to it more gradually than her bolder playmate who's diving right in—and what a splash she's going to make if she lands the way she's aiming

Below: You got prizes for making whoopee 'round the bowl in those days. Fashionable society went in for soap-bubble parties and they were rollicking affairs. The rewards await their claimants on the table in the foreground



A ten-strike for Tillie at the weekly meeting of the Mixed Gents and Ladies Olympia Bowling Club



Right: Before the days of beauty contests and fashion shows a broom drill in the Sunday-school room could get everybody all worked up