

# The Buyography of Bi

SHOULD A YOUNG MAN MARRY A GIRL WHO EARNS MORE  
MONEY THAN HE DOES?

By Jack Whitman

HER name was Willeta, but according to the various degrees of their intimacy her friends called her Billy, Bill, and Bi. She was an all-around girl. She enjoyed camping out in the wilderness as much as she delighted in the soothing and stimulating thrills that accompany an expert and expensive shampoo. Although Bi was a working girl, and rather inordinately proud of it, she was often taken for a débutante, especially when she vacationed at a fashionable place.

Her clothes were a delight to the eye and a caress to the touch. They were not expensive, though they looked it. They were designed, they were conceived and created, about her radiant personality; and she, who knew herself and her moods, was the designer. That, indeed, was her profession, and she was near the top of it.

At art school, several years before, she had taken the usual academic course, planning to teach art after winning her degree. Her family had made many sacrifices for her, hoping that she would become a teacher. Teachers, to them, were members of an honorable and distinguished profession; but as Bi observed the girls about her, and the futures into which they were plunged, she decided that the work of a teacher was altogether too dull for her. To the consternation of her family, she left school and entered the employ of an interior decorator.

Her father felt that there was something very useless about such employment, that it was not at all comparable to the distinguished calling of a pedagogue. In fact, he became quite eloquent about it, demanding that Willeta—he never used any other name for her—should realize what a serious misstep she was taking. A teacher of art, if it had to be of art, could be respectable, but an artist—well, they seldom were.

Bi had a way about her that conquered opposition—a way of making everything seem settled and sure, however uncertain it might appear to others. Her attitude itself convinced her parents that she was right. After a few months—especially when she was placed in charge of the decorations of the new hotel, receiving newspaper commendation—they accepted their artist child and partially forgot their disapproval.

She found, however, after this surprising initial success, that after all she was a failure at interior decoration. Just when her parents began to be sure of her and to sit back calmly, with no fear of a coming storm, she announced that she was leaving for New York, to resume her studies, especially of the figure, and that she intended to go in for some other branch of art.

Her plans were made, and so far as she was concerned they were unchangeable. She was so calm and assured about them that she forestalled the tears of her mother and the arguments of her father. Her manner still gave them confidence in her. She seemed so entirely sane that they could hardly accuse her of being a temperamental artist.

So she went to New York. After a time she became a member of the staff of a leading fashion periodical, and her costume drawings were studied by three million of America's smartest women. That there are three million smart women in America is decidedly to our credit.

Stanley West knew her so well that he called her Bi. He was an advertising writer from nine to five o'clock, and a poet, or at least a versifier, from five o'clock to midnight. She had been called in by his firm for some special designs for a new type of advertising, and Stan was to write the copy.

They worked together in harmony for several days, businesslike, professional, and aloof. Then, one day, they became so interested in their work that they forgot luncheon. They awakened with a start at six o'clock, to find the office deserted and the janitress looking broad hints through their door. From which it will be seen that they were artists, for only the surge of creative effort is strong enough to cause two vital youngsters to miss a meal.

Stan had been conscious of her pleasing presence, in a vague sort of way, but neither had indulged in an appraisal of the other. Now Stan looked at her in a new way. He saw that her blue eyes were bright and clear, that her skin was fresh, that she probably played tennis, that a smile with a whimsical twist poised on her lips. In answer he smiled, and in a moment they were laughing together most unprofessionally. Then Stan asked her to dinner.

As they sipped their coffee, Stan called her Bi. The boy was brisk, and he had a poetic way with him. That dinner was really the beginning of the end, or the end of the beginning, for never afterward did they meet without feeling a sudden joy—a joy to be met with laughter.

Before their work together was finished, Stanley had proposed and Bi had accepted him. They accomplished this sometimes embarrassing feat in a poetic and sublimely impractical way.

There had been no mention of money during the rapid courtship. They had talked of the moon, of poetry, of stagecraft and plays, of countless things, but never once, except in a superior and tolerant way, of the money that makes the wheels of the various arts and artifices go round. They were above it, and it is to be supposed that they pocketed their respective checks of a Saturday in a very aloof and aristocratic manner.

Now that the preliminary of proposal and acceptance was off his mind, Stan involuntarily forgot himself so far as to think of his bank account. His balance showed a few hundred dollars, saved temperamentally and spasmodically from a moderate salary. Then, in a flash of practical imagination, it came to him that Bi wore deuced good clothes, that she lived in a wonderful apartment—he had dined there on the night of acceptance—and could afford a colored maid.

He began to feel that there must be some strange discrepancy between their salaries, or that she must be a most economical housekeeper. The feeling made him somehow uncomfortable, for he was not the sort of man to care to have his wife his financial equal, although he prided himself that if she had a career he was broad enough to allow her to pursue it.

He was earning one hundred dollars a week, which sounds a great deal to those who make fifty, but is utterly insignificant to those who are in the two-hundred-dollar class. He had thought that Bi, a mere girl, could not be making more than fifty dollars a week; but now he began to doubt the correctness of the surmise. Her drawings were sought after, and advertising art was better paid than copy. What if she earned more than he?

The thought startled him, for he cherished the desire of being her protector. He could hardly protect a girl who was his economic superior. We Americans are rapidly dividing ourselves into more social strata than foreign nobility, with a few weekly dollars erecting the lines of demarcation.

Stan could talk effortlessly and fluently about many subjects, but money was not among them. He found it impossible to approach the subject of salary when he met Bi. They dined, they theatered, they even movied, but their converse was as light and frothy as the cooing of the proverbial doves, whose economic status is fixed and assured.

Unable to broach the subject by direct question and answer, or even by the indirect Socratic method—Bi was too clever for that—Stan began investigating the wages and remuneration of commercial artists. The investigation was fraught with contradictions, for he found that salaries ranged from ten dollars a week for the untemperamental incompetents to many hundreds a week for the temperamental incompetents, with even more and sometimes less for those of the other implied classes. There were as many rates of payment as there were artists. But he was stunned by the discovery that Bi, being in a class approaching eminence, must possess a lofty financial status.

On the avenue, one afternoon, when the first snow was falling and a crisp breeze brought out the color of their cheeks, Bi stopped before a shop window. It was the *maison* of a new *modiste*, evidently a very fashionable and expensive one, for the rental would be exorbitant. The window dis-

played a fur coat, full length, and of a soft brown, autumny shade. Brown was Bi's favorite color; it set off, without distraction, her rich color and fine hair. The coat had all the richness of October woods, and none of the flamboyance of the more conspicuous furs.

"Oh!" gasped Bi. "I like that!"

Bi's stamp of approval upon an article of apparel was final.

Stan agreed with her enthusiastically, and quickly thought that it would be a lovely present for her. Then, as he was about to suggest that they should enter the shop, he noted a small, suggestive, but almost inscrutable price mark. The figures were printed with the perfect assurance of quality, with the disdain which meant that the price was the last thing to be considered. The figures did not lie; the price of the coat was twelve hundred dollars.

Stan gasped. He owned a fur-lined overcoat, for which he had paid two hundred; but twelve hundred! Almost three months' work!

Bi made a mental note of the name over the door.

"I'm coming back to look at it again," she said.

Stan was dazed. Could she possibly think of buying it? Could she by any chance afford it? This would be a test. If she could, then glimmering went his hopes.

They did not meet for a week after that. Stan was plunged into a rush job, which required that he should give up verse for the present. It afforded him some consolation that he would receive a bonus for it, that it would increase his bank account a little.

On Sunday he called for her. He was elated, for the job had been more than was expected and the bonus proportionately larger. He was confident that if he were encouraged—by Bi—he would make a real success of the work.

He was so eager to tell her his good news that he did not at first observe what she wore; but as he helped her into the taxi, his hand touched a softness that caressed the skin. His eyes widened, and he forgot the miserable bonus. Bi was wearing the twelve-hundred-dollar coat!

## II

If this were a story of the poor working girl, the worthy but impecunious hero, and the rich roué, the third member of our dra-

matic triad would be introduced here. He would be immaculately dressed, and would smoke elongated and imported cigarettes. He would be objectionably gallant, and would have designs upon our little designer. For the reader's sake he is to be omitted, for this is the tale of a boy and a girl and weekly wages.

The *table d'hôte* was very good that night, as Bi averred; but Stan's usual fluency was dumb, and he had little joy. He brooded in silence until Bi insisted that he looked ill. Then, with the despair of the dying, he assumed a deceptively gay expression. After all, he thought, with no little affectation of the heroic, why not enjoy the last delight? Perhaps he would never see Bi again. Perhaps—

He danced with her again and again, eagerly and joyously; but his heart was breaking, for Stan was a serious young man, in spite of his very modern superficial lightness.

Between dances Bi talked of the home they would have. They gayly argued the merits of several suburbs. Stan talked of a wild Staten Island coast village; but Bi pointed out, with feminine practicality, that they would have to get up at four o'clock in the morning in order to reach their work by nine. She thought Jersey offered less fascinating but more available home sites.

"But your apartment is a beauty," Stan said. "How would you feel about giving it up?"

"Oh, I'm tired of it! I want to have the fun of designing a small house and furnishing it. If you'll give me all the rooms but two to do with as I like, you may carry out any wild notions you have in the others."

Stan thought of the house they might build and plan together. Bi's taste was satisfying, and he felt that he could trust her even to do his own rooms. She had a real appreciation for personality, and would decorate them as his surroundings. She would make them livable and yet artistic. If only they could have a house at all, she might do as she liked with all of its rooms; but he could never buy her a house in any suburb that could in any way compare with her apartment—nor any coat that could approach the exquisite softness of the twelve-hundred-dollar fur.

When Stan reached home that night, Bi's kisses lingered on his lips, a fragrance of

forget-me-nots. He felt that he should never see her again, and firmly resolved to write a final note, breaking the engagement.

He sat at his portable typewriter and endeavored to put his thought into words; but as he wrote the word money the tawdriness of the termination of his love for Bi came over him. He tore the paper from the machine and groaned. His face fell to the table between his arms.

He tried again, but with no better success. At length he resolved to put it off—until to-morrow, although he half knew that he would have no more courage on the morrow.

The morning was too glorious for tragic thoughts, for a light snow was falling, and a glow from the cloud-banked sun cast a gleam upon it.

The copy Stan wrote that day was worthless. He started well, but as soon as Bi came to his mind—as she did quite early—he could think of nothing else. Luckily, the work he was doing could wait.

At noon, impulsively, he telephoned Bi and asked her to lunch with him. He was resolved to tell her that the house in Jersey was an impossibility, that marriage was unthinkable on one hundred dollars a week. Mathematically, one hundred dollars a week becomes somewhat over five thousand a year. Stan's best friend taught English at Yarmouth College, and lived on less than five thousand a year in a fine old New England house in the little town; but in New York, where the tiniest room cost nearly one-fourth of Stan's wage, the methods of Einstein were necessary in keeping accounts. And living in New York was necessary for both Stan and Bi.

Bi agreed to lunch with him, but protested that she was very busy, and that it must be done in half an hour; so they sat in a secluded corner of a tiny lunch room, patronized chiefly by stenographers and clerks, and consumed diminutive portions of macaroni and cheese—a cheap but substantial food.

Stan could not bring himself to discuss the problem that was uppermost in his mind over such a luncheon. His sense of drama and of art demanded that the table should be spread luxuriously, that dim lights should fall upon it, that Bi should be radiant and unhurried, so that they might develop the scene in an effective and satisfying way. He loathed abruptness and haste.

Moreover, he feared that what he had to say would hurt Bi. He would have done anything to avoid hurting her, for his love was really a protective shield for the girl, although Stan had never noticed that she needed a shield.

As they stood outside for a moment before parting, Stan said:

"I have something to talk over with you. May I come up to-night?"

"Yes, but I'll be rather late. I may be kept until nine, and I may be home by seven thirty. You run up to the apartment right after dinner and wait for me. Cigarettes are on the living room table, and there's a wee bit of Scotch, which I've been saving for you, in the cellarette."

With that she was gone. Evidently she had not sensed Stan's perturbation; or perhaps she had sensed it, but had not allowed herself to give any sign. Stan could never determine just how much Bi saw and sensed. Sometimes she seemed very intuitive; again she was veiled in an impenetrable and logical certainty which no flashes of intuition could penetrate.

Indeed, the better Stan knew her, the less he knew of her cerebrations. Invariably her conclusions were right, but often she jumped at them over many hurdles of syllogism. Just as often she pondered and studied and analyzed. His mental processes—or so he thought—were always analytical; but Bi would have told him that he analyzed where it was unnecessary.

So it was with the problem of money that confronted him.

He got through the rest of the day somehow, but he did little work. His mind was devoted to the development of the scene that he and Bi would enact that night.

He thought of a dozen ways of expressing the impossibility of their marriage, but none of them was wholly satisfactory. He tried to think how Bi would take his decision. She would not faint, nor would she weep—that much was certain; but what would she do? He could not write her lines in the piece. She was an unknown quantity, and the success or failure of their little play depended upon her collaboration.

Her apartment was in one of the newer buildings on West Seventieth Street. It was the sort of building one expected to be occupied by actors, prosperous Western business men staying in New York for a few months, and nondescripts of equal prosperity. When Stan approached the



building he felt that he was meeting a superior, at least economically. The manager of his firm lived in just such a place.

As he entered the corridor and looked about him, he felt that this building was somehow different, that it had been designed and decorated by an artist. It seemed as if Bi had given the whole place her personality; but he put the thought aside. He was thinking of Bi so entirely that everything he saw was colored by her.

The clerk knew him, and when he explained that he was to wait for Bi in her rooms he was promptly admitted. She had not yet come home, but, as she had promised, there were cigarettes and a tiny drink of Scotch. Stan made himself comfortable in a luxurious chair. The quiet tone of the walls and the soft, shaded lights gave him a sense of ease that he had not felt for days. It was as if Bi herself were there, and her soft voice were shutting out the sound of the world. It was ineffably quiet and peaceful, and the whole room expressed escape from the workaday world that was so close.

When he decided to drink the Scotch—there was only enough for one high ball—he found it and a bottle of ginger ale in the cellarette. As he mixed the drink, his eyes fell upon a small book which had been carelessly tossed there. It was bound in limp leather, and he unconsciously picked it up and turned the leaves. By chance he turned to a page that was startling to him.

It was headed "purchases," and seemed to be a record of Bi's recent shopping. Stan read it frowningly, and whistled as the items sunk into his consciousness.

There was a pair of shoes that had cost thirty-five dollars. There was a purchase of ten pairs of silk stockings, at seven fifty the pair. A hat had cost ninety-five dollars, and Bi had marked it "cheap at the price." At least twenty purchases, all apparently recent, were recorded in the book. Stan mentally calculated the total, and found that it was close to fifteen hundred dollars for a period of two or three months.

The fur coat was not listed, and Stan added that to the total. Bi had spent, according to her own account, nearly twenty-five hundred dollars in a quarter of a year, and all for clothes. Half of his yearly salary spent in three months for clothes! Heavens, the girl must be a millionaire's daughter!

No, she had told him that she was repay-

ing her parents for the expenses of her education. Then she must make ten thousand a year, or more. That made it more impossible than ever. He could not hope, for years to come, to be able to support her in such style.

Stan needed the drink he had poured by the time all the implications of Bi's accounts had sunk into his brain, and he swallowed the whisky at a gulp. His next impulse was to make a hasty retreat, and he took up his coat. That would not be fair to Bi, who was a good pal, regardless of her income and outgo; so he melodramatically scribbled a note and left it on her desk table, which had a convertible drawing-board top, where she often worked at night.

The note was hasty but expressive. It read:

DEAR BI:

It can't be. We can't marry. My salary is too rotten. I could never support you right. It isn't fair to you to ask you to wait, or to suffer. It isn't fair to me to allow you to support yourself as my wife. It just can't be, and I'm too sorry to tell you straight out.

STAN.

He told the clerk that he could not wait, that he had left a note for Bi.

### III

WHEN she came home, a few minutes later, she was eager and joyous, for she had looked forward to the evening with Stan. She had worked hard all day and into the evening, but she was untired and fresh as a child at recess.

When the clerk handed her mail to her and told her that Stan had come and gone, she frowned. It wasn't fair of him to make the engagement, to awaken anticipation on her part, and then to leave her in the lurch. She was too tired to work, and she needed the recreation of his company. Now all she could do was to bathe and go to bed, which was not a delight on a starlit night like this.

Then she found Stan's note. She read it through without a murmur, but she felt that her whole life was ruined. A dull sob choked her.

She read it again, hoping to find some explanation other than the obvious one that Stan had given. She could not believe that he thought her mercenary. She could not think that he would allow a few miserable dollars to stand before their happiness.

What did it matter that his salary was small? Were they not young, and in love, and together? Why, she would have married him if he had only enough to buy a license and pay the clergyman. When Bi made up her mind, it was decisive, and she allowed no superficial obstacles to stand in her way. Money, to her, was a superficial thing, not to be considered seriously in the face of a deep emotion or desire.

She was disappointed in Stan, and in herself, that she had so failed to make him believe in her and her abiding love. Scores of people, she thought, lived on much less than Stan's salary, and were happy. Stan's ideas about money, she felt, were positively snobbish. She began to doubt his real love for her.

She discovered then that he had drunk the Scotch, and at the same time she made a more important discovery—that he had found and read what she called her “buyography.” She still held the note in her hand, and now she picked up the leather-bound book. There seemed to be some definite association between them.

She was positive, from the position of the book, that he had seen it. Worse, she felt that he had believed it. What a silly, schoolgirl thing it was to have about, anyway! And what a silly, schoolboy thing Stan had done as the result!

But as she thought of Stan, a new tenderness moistened her eyes. She had never observed just that kind of boyishness in him before. How nice of him to want to support and protect her! It made her feel delightfully diminutive and defenseless—a feeling she could seldom indulge. Underneath her modernity and efficiency Bi was an old-fashioned woman, and sometimes she relaxed sufficiently to enjoy the comforts of her mother and grandmother.

Suddenly she laughed. The irony of the situation evoked a saving humor. That Stan should allow such a trifle to stand between them was too childish; but at the same time it was endearing. She remembered that she had read somewhere that lovers' quarrels often had such small beginnings. Often they developed in quite tragic ways; but Bi was too modern to allow her love to be overcome by any such obstacle.

It was all very well to be old-fashioned, especially when it came to having a protector like Stan; but her Victorianism did not extend to allowing Stan to get away. She

realized that just now it was up to her to pursue, and she meant to do so with every modern trick she had learned from Ellen Key and Bernard Shaw.

She telephoned to Stan, but he had not gone home. As she hung up the receiver, she hoped that he was following up the start she had given him with the Scotch, for she knew that a boyish way of showing grief is to drink one's self to death. If he loved her, he would probably be drunk. She hoped he was, for he would not have another chance soon again. She meant to capture him and place him beyond such pranks.

She smiled happily to herself as she made ready for bed. Viewing Stan's note through the lens of humor made a big difference. He was a dear boy, after all!

#### IV

At half past seven o'clock the next morning Bi stood before Stan's rooming house. It was a rather dark and dismal old place, still showing the dignity of quality beneath the ravages of time. It was too dark, too old, for Stan. Bi felt that he must have been depressed by his surroundings.

She was admitted, rather reluctantly, by a maid as old as the house, who answered her ring as if it was an impertinence.

“I wish to see Mr. West,” Bi said.

“Yeh—come on in,” the maid answered, opening the door too little even for the slender Bi to pass through. “What's your name? I'll tell him you're here.”

“Miss—oh, can't I run up? Which is his room?”

The maid looked at her as if she had made a very improper remark. She opened her mouth, began to speak, and then mumbled to herself. Apparently undecided about the propriety of the early morning visit, she stared up the stairway. The long flight of stairs presented a mountainous climb to her ancient limbs. Her desire to avoid the climb won over her moral disapproval, though the battle was a stern one. Bi, who was unaccustomed to such surveillance, smiled as she followed the woman's slow cerebations.

“I guess so,” granted the latter, giving Bi a penetrating and searching gaze. “It's the third door on the right, next floor.”

Bi ran up.

She listened attentively before the door. She could hear Stan breathing heavily. He was still asleep.

Gently and quietly she turned the knob. The door gave to her touch, and she tiptoed into the room. Stan turned and groaned as she pressed the door shut, but he did not awake.

It was the first time Bi had been in his room. His clothing was strewn about carelessly on chairs and table. Manuscripts littered the top of a small desk. The odor of burned tobacco came from an ash tray. On the dressing table Bi found, and smiled as she found it, an empty pint bottle.

She read one or two of his verses. It was obvious that she had inspired them, and she felt a pleasant glow from the knowledge. As she laid them on the table, a heavy book fell to the floor with a crash. Stan suddenly awakened, and Bi was by his side.

"Good morning," she said amiably, as if her presence there was quite the usual thing.

Stan tried to smile, but his lips hurt with the effort. He glanced uncertainly from Bi to the table, and looked around the room. He struggled painfully to be debonair.

"Won't you sit down?" he stammered.

Bi sat on the bed and took his hand in hers. Her impulse was to ruffle his hair, or to box his ears lightly; but she repressed her smile and looked at him steadily—more steadily as he averted his eyes. He reminded her of her small brother, who had always sought her, instead of their mother, in time of trouble.

"I came to invite you to breakfast," she said at last.

Stan did not speak.

"I have nothing to do to-day," Bi went on. "If you could take the day off, we could have a holiday somewhere."

"A sort of funeral—a farewell party?" Stan tried to be jocular. "I started one alone last night."

"And finished it, I guess." Bi glanced speculatively at the empty pint bottle. "Then you don't want another? Well, I can always work."

Bi let his hand fall, and rose from the bed. She turned away abruptly, as if afraid to let him see her face. The sun poured upon her from the window and made the fires of her hair leap.

"Oh, Bi, I didn't mean that! Of course I want it. I want to be with you every minute, but—you got my note? It was a brutal way to put it, but don't you see—"

"I see very well. Let's not discuss that

part of it, Stan. Let's just have a holiday together."

She turned back to him, smiling. If tears had threatened, the danger was over now, and Stan saw her as a pal. They might have many holidays together, as before, if they could forget what might not be. He smiled with his old boyishness, and in a moment they were laughing together. Then Bi surrendered to her impulse, bent over, ruffled his hair, and kissed him.

"Hurry!" she called back as she left the room. "I'm hungry!"

## V

THERE was no snow that day, but the air was icy clear, and the sky had the cold, ethereal blue that possesses depth. One looked into it as well as at it. What Bi found there caused her to smile, for in the clear blue deeps she saw a Jersey cottage.

It was not until they were on the ferry, watching the gulls that followed the boat across the river, that Stan noticed the fur coat. Bi was wearing the twelve-hundred-dollar garment on a simple picnic. He had been too eager to grasp at the straw of comradeship that she offered him to observe it before, but now he studied it coldly and appraisingly. He wondered whether Bi could not have found as much warmth and beauty in a woolen garment, at one-tenth the cost.

As soon as they reached the woods, where Bi was intent upon walking—one of those rare small woods still to be found beyond the suburbs—he had forgotten the coat and everything else but Bi. She was a radiant, glorious figure, as she ran and skipped in the brown woods, in a coat the color of the gloriously dying leaves.

They walked all morning, and then Bi led Stan to a small inn for luncheon. She insisted upon paying the check, since she had ordered the meal in advance; but she was old-fashioned enough to allow him to help her into the fur coat.

"Now," she said, when they left the inn, "I'm going to surprise you."

"How—pleasantly?"

"Follow me."

She led him across a field and over a small bridge. The waters of a brook, swollen by early winter rains, flowed under it. Some distance beyond—perhaps a quarter of a mile away—were two small houses. She made no explanation until they had reached the first house.

It was very simple in contour, a modified Colonial cottage, freshly painted white, with bright green shutters. A cypress hedge separated it from its neighbor, and there were denuded elms and maples in the yard.

Stan took in the long low shape of the house and the grace with which it sank back against the outlined hills. It was just such a home as he had visualized—for Bi. Why was she showing it to him? To see it was worse than the fur coat, now that it could not be theirs.

"Do you like it?" Bi asked.

Stan turned to her, his face drawn with disappointment.

"Oh, Bi, I wish it could be ours! Like it? It's the best I ever saw—better than Staten Island, even."

That was a concession for Stan.

Bi fished into her bag and drew out two papers, which she handed to Stan. The first his eyes traversed was an option on the house, which indicated that a payment of five hundred dollars had been made. Future payments to be made monthly. The other was a marriage license, properly made out to be used by Stanley West and Willeta Coman. Bi pointed to it.

"I paid two dollars for that," she said. "It would be a shame not to use it!"

Stan looked from the papers to her and back again, uncomprehending.

"Stan, don't you understand? You proposed to me, and you love me—I know that; and I love you. Well, when you start to backslide and edge away, all because of a few dollars, you awaken my sporting instinct. I don't want to lose you, if you'll pardon my unwomanly frankness. In fact, boy, I love you a lot more than I ever said!"

Her eyes were moist as she looked at him. Boyishly, Stan looked away, stern.

"It isn't fair—" he began.

"Bosh! All the time you were overseas I was working, taking the place of some other man who was overseas. Oh, of course, I could have worked just the same any other time, but the absence of designers of your sex gave me a bigger chance than ever. No wonder you haven't a bank account, after two years over there! But that doesn't matter. I don't need the money. I wouldn't know what to do with it if I had it. I prefer simple things—"

"Simple? Why, your apartment must cost half what I make, and that coat—"

Bi's laugh rang out.

"Why, you old stupid, I don't rent my apartment! I was given a year's lease for decorating the interior of the building and selecting the furnishings. Didn't I ever tell you that? Oh, of course not—we had more interesting things to talk about."

"But your coat! Twelve hundred dollars! I couldn't buy anything like that for you."

"Sh! Stan, dear, if you will walk past the Maison Marvelle to-morrow, you will see the twelve-hundred-dollar coat still in the window. This is a rather poor imitation. It cost seventy-nine dollars and eighty-three cents, plus three days' work in copying the model and supervising the furrier. Why, I had to design two gowns for Marvelle to get a real look at the coat!"

"But I—I don't understand," Stan muttered, remembering the book he had found.

Bi reached into her bag and brought forth her "buyography."

"I knew you had seen this, silly!" she smiled. "Don't you know, infant, that every woman wants to buy everything she sees? Some of us don't, though—I imitate, sometimes with improvements. If you had turned the page, you would have seen the real prices of the clothes I buy, which I subtract from the shopkeepers' prices. That way I save a great deal—in my head. This"—tapping the book—"is just a way to gratify my sense of economy!"

Bi read the book over his shoulder. The hat that had apparently cost ninety-five dollars was really fifteen. Shoes, stockings, and gloves were high, but, as Bi explained, she could not make them.

"I might paint on my stockings," she murmured thoughtfully.

But just then Stan woke up to his own stupidity. He took Bi in his arms, held her close, and kissed her. Somehow—how he did not yet entirely understand—she had saved their happiness. He murmured his love to her. Then, suddenly, he held her away from him.

"I'm afraid you're too clever for me to marry!" he said, half smiling. "I never was good at saving money."

"You don't need to be. Just bring your checks to Bi."

He kissed her again.

"What do we do next?"

"First, we go over to the minister's, across that field, and use this license." Bi tapped it significantly. She was taking no



further chances on Stan. "Then we can look at the house."

As they ran across the field, Stan stopped her again.

"Lady," he said, "how much do you earn a week?"

"Fifty dollars. Why?"

Stan sighed with relief.

"Gee, I'm glad it isn't any more! Now I can protect you!"

"And love me," she added, putting his arm around her waist.

# El Capitan's Revenge

## THE STORY OF SEÑOR PUMALOK AND HIS CHAMPION FIGHTING COCK

By Philip M. Fisher, Jr.

HIS name was José Rizal de Esperanza Pumalok, and he was very proud of the first part of it, *señor*, for he was true second cousin to the great patriot and scholar of our country. And he was vain, too, of the middle part, Esperanza; for that, as you must know, means "hope" in your English speech, and of a truth he was a man full of overflowing of hope, for his luck in the pit was fast making him rich. The year before, at the fights in Manila during the Fiesta de la Natividad, had he not fought his big cock, El Sanguinario, for a purse of one thousand pesos, and won? Rich? Ah, he was indeed rich!

And the cock? You do well, *señor*, American that you are, to ask about the health of that grand fighter. Alas, El Sanguinario lived not more than one hour after making his great kill, for he had won the fight even after taking a mortal wound. He had fought on and on, though his right wing was hanging by but the smallest shred, and below it his thigh was gashed from joint to joint. Yes, he died of the fight, and was eaten even that night by his master and his master's family—who were saddened little, for a thousand pesos, *señor*, is much money.

*Chuh!* To me it seemed that this Pumalok was almost a cannibal; but to Pumalok it was economy, and saved buying meat. From that you will see what a man was this José Rizal de Esperanza Pumalok—or, rather, what a real man he was not.

But God above sees these things, *señor*. In this, at least, are the priests right; for

they say that the good God sees all, and that, seeing all, He rewards those things which are good, and those that are evil He punishes.

I do not mean to say that others do not use fallen *gallos de combate* for food. No—poor men cannot afford such waste; but a thousand pesos! El Sanguinario should have had Christian burial, with ceremony, and the San Roque band to play a march to rejoice the fighting spirit, and flowers to cover the gallant body. That were justice, and decent; but this Pumalok—*chuh!*

As I said, God saw, and truly do I believe that He punished. The punishment fitted well, as you will see.

Pumalok lived mightily for a month, and people bowed deeply to him now, for he had money. Yet they did not cross the *camino* to meet him, and when they said "*Buenas dias*," it was with the tongue in the cheek.

Pumalok looked about him for another chicken; but none who owned good fighters in this province would sell, for a good Filipino, *señor*, loves his fighting cock next to his wife—and some even before their wives, as I well could tell, though that is another story. No, they would not sell—not to this cannibal with all his money—not to a man who would eat the gallant fighter who made him rich.

And so Pumalok was angry. As he went into the yard and looked upon the cocks he had there, each one tied by its short line to a little stake, and watched them pecking at the earth where it was damp by