



The ORIOLE
by
Booth Tarkington
Illustrations by
Irwin Myers
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Noble Looked Puzzled. "Surprising to See Me?" He Said Vaguely.

Florence stepped into the sheltering vestibule, peeping round it with earnest eyes to watch him as he went by; obviously he had taken no note of her. Satisfied of this, she waited until he was at a little distance, then ran lightly to the gate, hurried after him, and joined him.

"Why, Mr. Dill!" she exclaimed, in her mother's most polished manner. "How surprising to see you! I presume, as we both happen to be walking in the same direction, we might just as well keep together."

Noble looked puzzled. "Surprising to see me?" he said vaguely. "I haven't been away anywhere in particular, Florence." Then, at a thought, he brightened hopefully. "I'm glad to see you, Florence. Do you know if any of your family or relatives have heard when your Aunt Julia is coming home?"

"Aunt Julia? Why, she's out of town," said Florence. "She's visiting different people she used to know when she was away at school."

"Yes, I know," Mr. Dill returned. "She's been gone six weeks."

"Oh, I don't believe it's that long," Florence said, casually; then with more earnestness: "Mr. Dill, I was going to ask you something; it's kind of a funny question for me to ask, but—"

"Yes, she has," Noble interrupted, though not sensible that his remark was an interruption, for he had been unaware of Florence's voice in action after the word "long." "Oh, yes, she has," he said. "It was six weeks, day-before-yesterday afternoon. I saw your father downtown this morning, and he said he didn't know that any of the family had heard just when she was coming home. I thought maybe some of your relatives had a letter from her by this afternoon's mail, maybe."

"I guess not," said Florence. "Mr. Dill, there was a question I thought I'd ask you—it's kind of a funny question for me to—"

"Are you sure nobody's heard from your Aunt Julia today?" Noble insisted.

"I guess they haven't," Mr. Dill, I was going to ask you—"

"It's strange," he murmured. "I don't see how people can enjoy visits that long. I should think they'd get anxious about what might happen at home."

"Oh, grandpa's all right; he says he kind of likes to have the house nice and quiet to himself; and anyway Aunt Julia enjoys visiting." Florence assured him; "Aunt Fanny saw a newspaper from one of the places where Aunt Julia's visiting her school room-mate, that had her picture in it and called her 'the famous Northern Beauty'; it was down South somewhere. Well, Mr. Dill, I was just saying I believed I'd ask you—"

But a sectional rumber seemed to affect the young man all at once. "Oh, yes, I heard about that," he said. "Your Aunt Fanny lent my mother the newspaper. Those people in that part of the country—well—" He paused, remembering that it was only Florence he addressed; and he withheld from utterance his opinion that the Civil War ought to be fought all over again. "Your father said your grandfather hadn't heard from her for several days, and even then she hadn't said when she was coming home."

"No, I expect she didn't," said Florence. "Mr. Dill, I was going to ask you something—it's kind of a queer kind of question for me to ask, I guess—" she paused. However, he did not interrupt her, seeming preoccupied with gloom; whereupon Florence permitted herself a deprecatory laugh and continued: "It might be you'd answer yes,

or it might be you'd answer no; but anyway I was going to ask you—it's kind of a funny question for me to ask, I expect—but do you like poetry?"

"What?"

"Well, as things have turned out lately I guess it's kind of a funny question, Mr. Dill; but do you like poetry?"

Noble's expression took on a coldness; for the word brought to his mind a thought of Newland Saunders. This was a poet of Noble's age, who wrote verses to Julia—that too-lovely, absent aunt of Florence's. "Do I like poetry?" said Noble. "No, I don't."

Florence was momentarily discouraged but at her age people usually possess an invaluable faculty which they lose later in life; and it is a pity they do lose it. At thirteen—especially the earlier months of thirteen—they are still able to set aside and dismiss from their minds almost any facts, no matter how audibly those facts have asked for recognition. Children superbly allow themselves to become deaf, so to speak, to undesirable circumstances; most frequently, of course, to undesirable circumstances in the way of parental direction; so that fathers, mothers, nurses, or governesses, not comprehending that this mental deafness is for the time being entirely genuine, are liable to hoarseness both of throat and temper. Thirteen is an age when the fading of this gift or talent—one of the most beautiful of childhood—begins to impair its helpfulness, under the mistaken stress of discipline; but Florence retained something of it. In a moment or two Noble Dill's disaffection toward poetry was altogether as if it did not exist.

She coughed, inclined her head a little to one side, in her mother's manner of politeness to callers, and, repeating her deprecatory laugh, remarked, "Well, of course it's kind of a funny question for me to ask, of course."

"What is, Florence?" Noble inquired absently.

"Well—what I was saying was that 'course it's sort of queer me askin' if you liked poetry, of course, on account of my writing poetry the way I do now."

She looked up at him with a bright readiness to respond modestly to whatever exclamation his wonder should dictate; but Noble's attention had straggled again. He failed to comprehend what she had set before him.

"Has she written your mother lately?" he asked.

Florence's expression denoted a mental condition slightly disturbed. "No," she said. "It's going to be printed in the North End Daily Oriole."

"What?"

"My poem. It's about a vast amen—anyhow that's probably the best thing in it. I guess—and they're going to have it tomorrow, or else they'll have to settle with me; that's one thing certain: I'll bring one over to your house and leave it at the door for you, Mr. Dill."

Noble had but a confused notion of what she thus generally promised. However, he said, "Thank you," and nodded vaguely.

"Of course, I don't know as it's so awful good," Florence admitted insincerely. "The family all seem to think it's something pretty much; but I don't know if it is or not. Really, I don't!"

"No," said Noble, still confused. "I suppose not."

"I'm half way through another one I think myself'll be a good deal better, I'm not going as fast with it as I did with the other one, and I expect it'll be quite a ways ahead of this one." She again employed the deprecatory little laugh. "I don't know how I do it, myself. The family all think it's sort of funny; I don't know how I do it myself; but that's the way it is. They all say if they could do it they're sure they'd know how they did it; but I guess they're wrong. I presume if you can do it, why it just comes to you? Don't you presume that's the way it is, Mr. Dill?"

"I—guess so." They had reached his gate, and he stopped. "You're sure none of your family have heard anything today?" he asked anxiously.

"From Aunt Julia? I don't think they have."

He sighed, and opened the gate. "Well, good evening, Florence."

"Good evening." Her eyes followed him wistfully as he passed within the inclosure; then she turned and walked quickly toward her own home; but at the corner of the next fence she called over her shoulder. "I'll leave it with your mother for you, if you're not home when I bring it."

"What?" he shouted, from the vicinity of his front door.

"I'll leave it with your mother."

"Leave what?"

"The poem!"

"Oh!" said Noble.

His mother handed him a copy of the first issue of the North End Daily Oriole, the next day when he came

home to lunch. He read it without edification; there was nothing about Julia in it.

THE North End daily Oriole
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NEWS OF THE CITY

"The Candidates for mayor at the election are Mr. P. N. Gordon and John T. Milo. The contest is very great between these candidates."

"Holcombs chickens get in MR. Joseph Atwater's yard a god dent lately. He says chickens are out of place in a city of this size."

"Minnie the cook of MR. F. L. Smith's residence goes downtown every Thursday after about three her regular day for it."

"A new ditch is being dug across the MR. Henry D. Vance backyard. 'Tis about dug but nobody is working there now. Patty Fairchild received the highest mark in declamation of the 7A at Summer School last Friday."

"Balf's grocery wagon ran over a cat of the Mr. Rayfort family." Geo. the driver of the wagon stated he had not but was willing to take it away and bury it somewhere Geo. stated regret and claimed nothing but an accident which could not be helped and not his team that did the damage."

"Miss Colfield teacher of the 7 A at Summer School was reported on the sick list. We hope she will soon be well."

"There were several deaths in the city this week."

"MR. Fairchild father of Patty Fairchild was on the sick list several days and did not go to his office but is out now."

"Rep. Kriso the chauffeur of the Mr. R. G. Atwater family washes their car on Monday. In using the hose he turned water over the fence accidently and hit Louie the was. When in back of MRS. Bruffs who called him some low names. Ben told her if she had been a man he would strike her but soon the disturbance was at an end. There is a good deal more of other news which will be printed in our next NO."

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Such, as is sometimes said, was the first issue, complete, of the North End Daily Oriole. Florence was not immediately critical of some distortions of meaning in the body of her poem, due partly to Atwater & Rooter's natural lack of experience in a new and exciting trade; partly to their enviable unconsciousness of any necessity for proofreading; and somewhat to their haste in getting through the final, and least interesting stage of their undertaking, Florence's poem being, in fact, so far as the printers were concerned, mere luck work and anti-climax.

(To Be Continued)

Opinion in Amsterdam is outspoken to the effect that the natives of Holland should be referred to as Hollanders, not as Dutchmen. It is possible that "Dutch" sounds to much like "Deutsch" to be pleasant to them.

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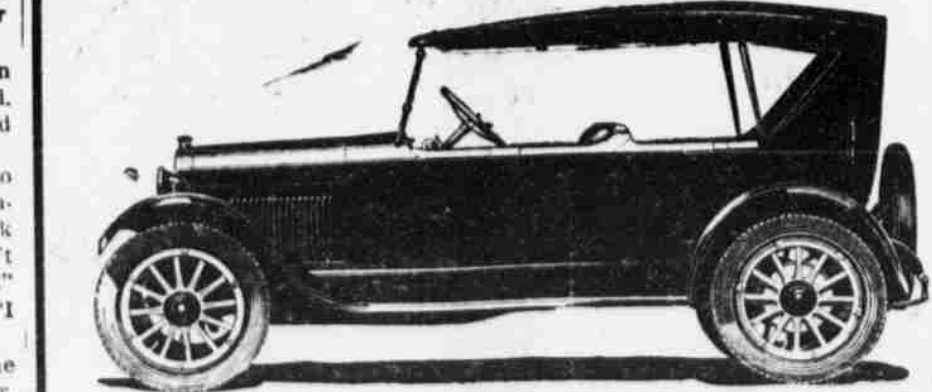
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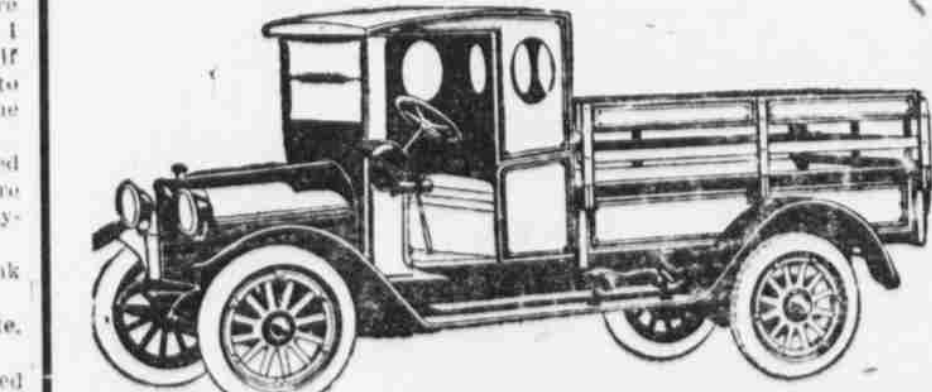
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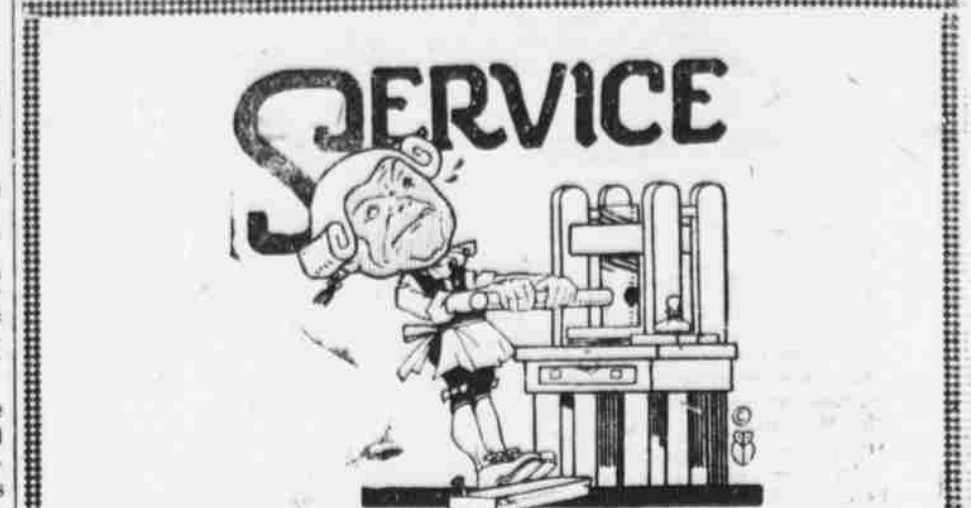


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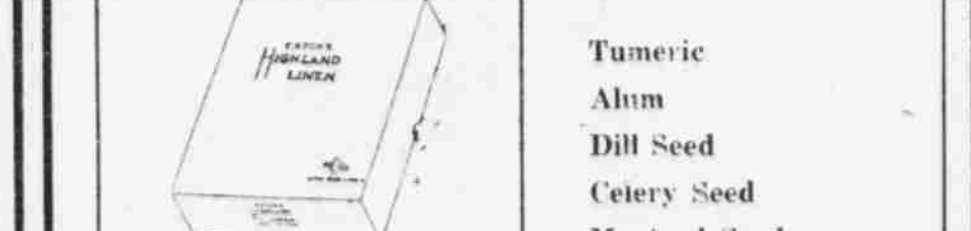
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