

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK.

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(Continued From Yesterday.)

Perhaps she had been brought. But she had to push life away from her for a moment. Even a servant would have the right to putter alone. . . .

It was of no consequence that Stan was married and that she had no possible difference. She had said this to herself many times. He would have told her everything if she had let him. Had she really liked the mystery of him? Had a kind of mysterious badness been part of what ever it was that could take hold of her? If she had known about the high-kicking wife at the beginning would he have had the same look? Would she have had the feelings that had bothered her so much? Very likely if he had told her of the wife who would have found a way of moving her feet sorry for him. Evidently men did that. Probably the dancer made Stan feel sorry for her before she ran away. You had quarrels and began being sorry for yourself. Then you found somebody who would sympathize enough. . . . It was all horrible. Silly at the start, maybe, and then more so.

No, the wife part added no glamor to Stan. Somehow it seemed to daub him more than being called a crook. But it was not important just now it would be of no importance if he had a score of wives. . . .

Meanwhile, the house ached with silence. She found that Marty had put himself to bed.

In the morning Marty was disagreeably quiet. His remark that real summer had begun, sounded forced. Jo Ellen, bustling about her morning housework, concealed by her industry a sense of heaviness that was pierced by sharp twinges of remorse. If her two voices had had time to converse, one would have said to the other, "You needn't have flared up." And the other would have answered, "That's where you're wrong. I didn't have to, but I just needed to. I've got to keep going. When it's necessary to slam things, why, then. . . ."

She was accustomed to closely detailed mental pictures. The one of a husband had been spoiled. There was another one of a wife. This one always wore a pretty house dress and a look of patient nobility. Not meekness, but a kind of radiant gentleness. She never flared up. Her hair wasn't red, but rather darkish, evidently. And you didn't think of her so much as going out and mixing. If she did mix you could pick her up anywhere. You would know her the way you would know a doctor, an actor, or a store detective. Jo Ellen felt as if she could never be any better than an understudy to the real thing, because the conditions weren't

like those in any picture. She had to go out; and going out to work and coming back were more the man's way, naturally. When the man couldn't lead, everything was changed. When you couldn't see his figure finding the path, your picture had to be changed, and you had to be changed. Probably everybody had to be changed a little to fit mind pictures. But the process had fearful difficulties.

The morning was humid. Hot smells came through the windows. The heavy-heeled woman in the flat above started a vacuum cleaner that emitted a sound like the wail of the doomed. The buzzer at the dumb waiter asked for the garbage. A ring from the house bell meant that the postman was dropping letters. Jo Ellen brought up the mail before going away. This became a formula. Marty would pause with his morning paper until she came up again or failed to come. To him a better hearing of enormous importance. He would reread it after she was gone.

On this morning his arms clung to her at the last.

"We're all right, aren't we?" he said in a kiss.

"Sure."

He had asked her to get him some razor blades; and she was to bring him a book she had at the office—a very romantic book from which they were making a play.

It was after she had gone that it occurred to him how easy it might be for her to conceal the getting of a letter. He had a momentary sense of meanness at the thought, yet he elaborated the idea as one that was forced upon him by circumstances. He remembered something of the kind in a book which led him to speculate for a long time over the many forms of concealment that might be practiced upon a stricken person. He was able to work out certain devices that took on the intricacy of melodrama.

Uncle Ben had a theory that private telephone messages did not improve a girl's position in her office. There were glaring examples in his own place. So that he preferred writing a note to Jo Ellen suggesting a rather laborious joke that she might go to lunch with him; and since she was at the mercy of a man who didn't always consider the clock, she might call him when she was ready. He named a meeting corner with particularity.

This first midday restaurant meal together was a great success. Uncle Ben preferred a place where he knew the waiters, especially one waiter who looked like a Montenerin prince. It was a place that reached its noise crisis at noon rather than in the evening. Uncle Ben didn't mind the noise. He boomed his order cordially, and the princelike-looking waiter had a way of obliterating obstacles to speed.

Uncle Ben made it plain that he suspected Jo Ellen of not getting enough to eat. He named a meeting corner with particularity.

"You'll feed your man," he said, "but with the office and everything you'll get hot up and won't feed yourself properly."

"Nonsense," returned Jo Ellen. "Do I look wasted?"

"You look fine," admitted Bogert. "But shake this. If you try to do everything, you'll get thinner. It don't do any good to wear yourself out. Of course, if you'd both been working you would be going out to dinner and all that. Now look what you're trying to do!"

"Look at me—eating lunch with you and letting Marty scrap for himself."

"Lord!" cried Bogert. "If you started hustling home for lunch that would finish you—clean finish you."

"I may try it," said Jo Ellen. "Marty says he'll get it all ready."

"Don't you do it. Leave yourself a little freedom."

Bogert had a significant glance to accompany this.

"The reason I didn't promise is that I can't ever be sure when Eberly will go out or what I may have to do."

"Of course. You're going to be tied. Jo Ellen, tied. You'll owe it to Marty as well as your own self to keep from—from being pulled to pieces. Anybody might say it couldn't be done—the thing you're trying to do. Maybe it can't. Then again, you might."

"Fool them," suggested Jo Ellen.

"That's it. There's the risk, too. And just like you—to think about fooling them. Don't you give a damn about what anybody expects. That's my dope. You're going to be fair to Marty. But don't you think too much about proving anything to other people. Get me? You and Marty work it out. You two. When the time for help comes don't you be too—too proud. This isn't your fault."

"Nor his either."

"No. It just fell on the two of you. Well, don't act as if you could mend it all."

"Just my share," said Jo Ellen in a tone which Bogert recognized as suggesting the end of the argument. There was gossip from Inwood. Myrtle Fleck's father had had her arrested.

"She's a bad one," said Bogert. "I guess there was nothing else to do. Staying out all night."

"I'm sorry for her mother," murmured Jo Ellen in her distress. "Tea—A rotten thing to have happened."

"Her father doesn't understand her at all."

"Understand her?" Bogert suspended attention to his stew. "I'd say it was awfully easy to understand her. About the easiest thing ever. She's crooked—naturally crooked."

"She naturally likes a good time, and in a girl I suppose that's being crooked."

Bogert was astounded.

"What do you mean? Is that the Broadway of it?"

This was a mistake, and Bogert saw it at once. "That isn't the way I wanted to put the thing," he said in amendment. "Only you did sound—"

"I tell you, uncle, I saw them make that girl the way she is. Her father kept her in that coop on a house-boat. She was bound to break out."

"You bet she was bound to break out. I used to feel nervous seeing you with her. If I hadn't thought of you standing her up—"

"I'm glad you weren't really afraid for me," Jo Ellen said lightly.

"You? Gosh, no! Not you. I guess it's too late for me to begin not being sure of you."

"Even on Broadway?"

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBS



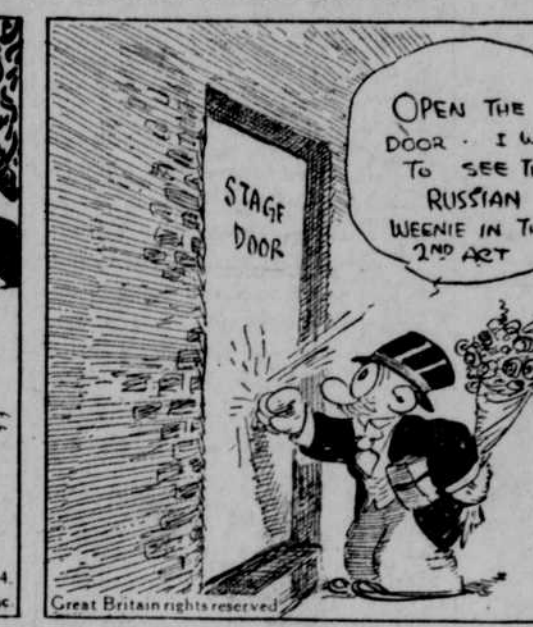
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New York

--Day by Day--

By O. O. MCINTIRE.

New York, Aug. 8.—Thoughts while strolling round New York: Well, I'll be dogged! A Broadway cab named "The Cave of the Fallen Angels." Edger Salton, admiring a silk house robe, Jerome Kern and P. G. Wodehouse. A new French book shop.

A former prizefighter begging booze and a blond. Wonder where I left my umbrella. The passing flow of celebrities. Seasonal crazes. Actors. Artists. And astute charlatans. A pagan generation. Uttering barbaric yawns. There goes a millionaire first.

A flock of midgets. Lying a squirrel-in-the-cage existence. The weekend heira for the country. Give me meat and the city rather than the open spaces of mosquitoes. Noonday lecturers espousing a hundred causes along the curb.

The tenements of Tenth avenue. The smell of a thousand washings. Patient women submerged in the humdrum depths of dull domesticity. A voodoo doctor. And by perverse irony named Prof. Slick. Hell's Kitchen. Hard-boiled yeggs.

Isaac Marcossow with a dazzling new checkered shirt. What's he doing wayway over here? The ripple of the Hudson. And the pungent odor of mud flat and marsh. A pack of hunting dogs. I don't see how anyone can kill any kind of an animal.

Sturdy rivermen wreathed in pipe smoke. Snorting locomotives making Riverside drive hideous. The loaded silence about the Schwab mansion. Amelia Bingham still has the status of a front. At least twenty mammoth apartment houses have gone up since last I was here.

The epic and span upper Broadway section. The nearest to small-town atmosphere anywhere in New York. Mothers patrolling the sidewalks with baby carriages. Older women knitting in chairs along the curb. The screech and shout of youth at play.

Miss Anne Morgan, daughter of the late J. P. Morgan, lost a \$2,500 platinum cigaret case in a theater one night recently. A doorman found it and restored it to the owner. He received a check large enough to lift a mortgage on his home.

Eddie Cantor was elected mayor of Broadway in an election held by a newspaper. For years Chinatown has had a mayor. So has Second avenue and Essex street has its duke, but this is the first time Broadway has ever had a mayor.

Hundreds of women in New York make a good living as professional shoppers. They do the shopping for visitors free and have the purchased articles charged to their own account. They make their pay by receiving 10 per cent discount from big stores and shops. There are several professional shoppers who average \$10,000 a year. In many instances they do not have to do the shopping. The customers merely have the articles charged to their account and in this way they collect the discount without any labor whatsoever.

New York theaters are open Sunday nights for "sacred concerts." They are in reality mere vaudeville shows which somehow manage to get around the law. Costuming is barred to a great extent and the performers appear in their street clothes. Still, most actors' street clothes are con-

There's at Least One on Every Beach



ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield

