

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK.

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(Continued From Yesterday.)

"What's Jo Ellen doing here?"

"I suppose she could make a visit," returned his mother.

"Seems as if she was living here again," Billy observed, returning to his book.

To Jo Ellen Billy's presence softened the awkwardness of the home-coming. There might be constraint in remembering that he was there, but she was glad of an interval in which the bitter subject must wait.

"I've nearly talked her to death," said Bogert.

Mrs. Bogert spoke of Jo Ellen's office work, and gave some account of her own affairs, which had, it appeared, gathered freshly picturesque features. Mrs. Bogert still berated New York in total, while admitting that certain of its traits, including those particularly to be despised, were not unfavorable to business. However, Jo Ellen soon realized that her grandmother was not at her brightest. A dullness fell upon them all, a quivering dullness that bespoke the hidden excitement. Her sense of the hidden and guarded came to Jo Ellen as peculiarly pathetic. She saw an eternity of cautions. It was a relief that her mother's transparent strategy should draw Uncle Ben into the kitchen, whence booming whispers came in token of a relaxed tension. Billy decided to go off to his room. Yet the privilege of speaking freely, now that it had come, appeared to affect Mrs. Bogert awkwardly. Her eagerness centered in the thoughts of her grand-daughter. These were distressingly difficult to reach.

"I know how it is," said Mrs. Bogert. "Sometimes we just want to be let alone. I've been that way. To feel things out. Feeling. I guess that's deeper down than thinking. What's hardest is to feel pushed."

Jo Ellen nodded.

"It all comes around to what you can find in your heart to do. That's about it."

"I get to wondering," said Jo Ellen, "whether it is a heart thing, whether all that part hasn't been rubbed out. All the time, I know. The shrewd wrinkles around Mrs. Bogert's eyes were accentuated.

"No, my dear. Can't be done. When we have nothing else to go on we get around to that. If I knew, you'd be saying to yourself that you want to do the right thing. But if your heart doesn't back you up, I wouldn't count much on what you do. We have to feel our way through. You may feel—she put an arm about Jo Ellen's shoulders—"you may feel you're being crucified down there. But you have to think of how you would feel if you checked Marty. No matter how many people we're tied to, no matter how many we cut

away from, we still have to live with ourselves. Sometimes it's a case of feeling out which will make us least miserable. That isn't being very comforting, is it?"

Poor Grandmother! She was keenly miserable herself, and she was being persuaded to act a false part. Her real wish was for rebellion. Everything she said sounded as if it had been said a million times before. Everything that anybody said must sound staid and mechanical.

Even when Grandmother was murmuring, as if hoping to be impressive, "We take the oath—for better or for worse," there was the old wives' sound that suggested despair and the fatalistic consolations of a leap in the dark.

Poor family! Trying to do this mysterious right thing, whatever it was. Hiding its hates in a conspiracy to be safe—to keep the form, by some miracle to hold all the pieces together with the glue of a gloomy kindness. His eyes very wide, to hold Jo Ellen's pieces together.

When Jo Ellen went to her bed it was with a feverish sense of the pressure of a tight blankness into which any sharp, face, words, foolish dissolving images, streakings that were like pains made visible.

And the whole affair was so simple. You neither went back to the roof or you didn't. Nothing that you could think or that any one else could say might take away any of this awful simplicity.

It was while she sat before her old bureau that the scratch came at the door.

Uncle Ben. He was without a collar, as though he had started to undress for the night. He looked curiously big as he came. An ungainly way of dodging in, with a furtive glance of precaution, his lips parted and his eyes very wide, open, gave him a blundering effect.

Jo Ellen felt no surprise, no curiosity. She looked at him without a flicker. There seemed to be no room in her for any emotion. Nothing that could follow her into the innermost places would any longer be astonishing or even irritating. It was all part of this simple thing that stood up before you like a gate—or perhaps like an iron door. And Uncle Ben had to be heard. He had to unload whatever was behind this look of his. They would all keep on piling up around you things you would have to climb over . . .

"You don't mind my saying something, Jo Ellen?"

As though he had never said a word!

"I told you this wasn't like Marty—that you couldn't tell how it might happen—to any man—no matter where he was—that you couldn't say by what came out of it how bad he was. I can't be sure you get that. It makes a difference—if you can get it. See? If you can get it how a temptation, a desire, a temptation will sneak up on him or suddenly be right there, soft and easy looking—not looking wicked—and him not feeling like a bad man at all—not being a bad man at all. Then the punishment hits him like a ton of brick. I know—sounds like old stuff. It is old stuff. So's being unhappy. Say—"

Bogert puffed open his shirt and thrust forward a shoulder under the light.

"Look at that!"

"Look at that!"

She saw the brown hieroglyph in the flesh.

"Teeth!"

His rasping whisper might have been supposed to sum up all that needed to be said. But she went on.

"I never was bad. Not bad. I can say that. I know. We know about ourselves. Other people make a guess. We know just how it has been with us. I was with a girl, not thinking of anything but her. Spooning. I was sure we would be married. I hadn't asked her. We were drifting along—drifting. I thought she was—she was a wonderful sort of girl. She had me. Then the wild animal broke in—the rotten beast who was her husband. It wasn't a badger game or anything like that. She thought he was in Chicago and that she'd never see him again. She told me that afterward. I've always believed her. Anyway, there was the beast. We wrecked the place between us. There were no rules. Not a rule. The bite in the shoulder was the worst for me. That was a nasty one. I wasn't satisfied until I made sure that if he ever hit anybody again, it would be with store teeth. She hit him with a chair."

Bogert drew a deep breath of reminiscence, and stood wavering.

"By that time we were pretty bloody. It was fearful. One of us might have been killed."

He shook a paw at Jo Ellen.

"One of us might have been crippled for life about a girl. If it had been me, I wouldn't have got much sympathy, would I? Fooling with another man's wife. Served me right—that's what they'd say. They'd

have pointed me out as a dirty hound who hunted women. Sure thing. I wouldn't have had a show. Well—Bogert appeared to be bewildered by his own outburst. His face crimsoned as with shame. "There it is. That was what I'm telling you. You know how we know about Marty? You

can't feel the way I do. You're a girl. You can't see how it might be—how he might have got in for it with a crazy man. We don't know about the girl. You don't expect him to accuse the girl. I don't say how it was. Maybe she was all right at that. We don't know. But

we know what he got, and, by God! it was enough. That's what I'm saying—it's enough. We don't need to put on any more. Not a damned bit more."

Jo Ellen stood up. Bogert was able to see how the hand that touched the bureau was trembling. He made a movement as if to reach for her, and was arrested by some second consideration; perhaps by the fact that save for the quivering hand, she did not move. In another instant he was stealing out, closing the door without a click.

She stood for a long time, quite

still, staring at the door knob. Her breathing seemed to be affected by an immense and painful compassion. When she shut her eyes new streaks of ugliness had intruded. It was a pity there had to be the blood on Uncle Ben.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

"Of course you are in favor of world peace," answered Senator Borahum. "In a reasonable time I hope to see our part of the world so peaceable that prohibition agents and bicycle policemen won't have to carry evolvers."—Washington Star.

THE NEBBES



YOU TELL HIM KID



Barney Google and Spark Plug

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT FOR BARNEY

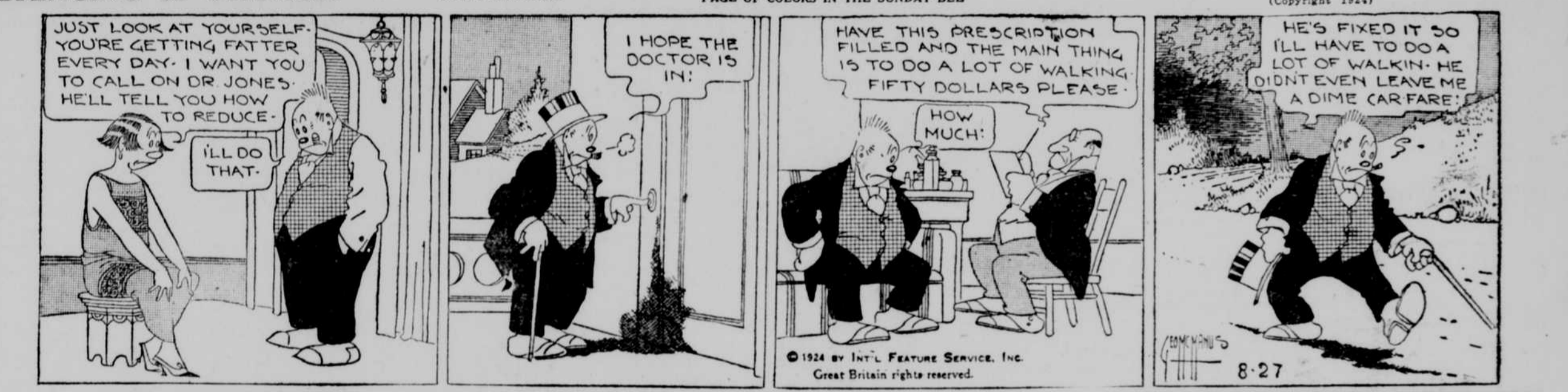
Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck



BRINGING UP FATHER

Registered U. S. Patent Office. SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus



JERRY ON THE JOB

ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban



How to Start the Evening Wrong.

By Briggs ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield



New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. McINTYRE.

New York, Aug. 27.—It was in one of those white-tiled tooth and jaw gymnasia around breakfast time when New York eats food on the fly to hurry to work. There is a delightful clutter and bang, but no one talks. The imprint of sleep has not yet been erased from faces.

A thousand and one little dramas are being enacted. In the doorway stood a white-bearded old man. His daughter was haranguing him. "You had three dollars when you left home," she chafed. "I know, but I spent it"—and then a trifle embarrassed, "I bought a bottle of that rejuvenator."

Across from me sat three young men on their first visit to the big town. Each had a sheaf of postcards upon which he was scribbling those, "Wish you were here" and "X marks my hotel room" messages to the folks back home.

The thinnest man I ever saw gave this order: bacon and eggs, cornmeal cakes, buttered toast, French fried potatoes and a cup of coffee. He was polishing it off with the second order of cornmeal cakes when I made my departure.

A vaudeville team came in—a pair of those nifty hoofers that open and close a show. They carried traveling bags and buried their faces in copies of Variety. The waitress evidently recognized them and gave the marble topped table an extra polish. Each left a nickel tip.

A harried mother with three ill-tempered youngsters was snatching a bite between trains. The girls, evidently stenographers, were politely stopped by the manager from puffing cigarets. A man with a bad night look held an aching head in his hands.

A flurry at the door. Two youths are caught trying to change the amount of their checks. The "thinnest man" proved to be the house detective and bristled with importance.

One of the professional preventers writes me to do my bit for an anti-tipping campaign. "What does your hat cost you in tips?" he asks. I reply in search for the quick return. Then I begin to figure. Ten cents a day in New York is a mild average if one patronizes cafes regularly. That is \$36.50 a year. It is the price of three good hats and a necktie thrown in. Still it seems worth it when one considers the avoidance of being snubbed by hat checkers.

There used to be a few places where one did not have to check his hat but most all have joined the gold diggers. The cafe, chop house, tea room, "best" counter, cafeteria, "slap yourself" place, table d'hote and bakery all have the checking system. About the only hope I see is for a visiting nobleman to begin eating with his hat on. New York will follow with a rush.

There might be another cure in the custom of three well known New Yorkers—a playwright, a magazine writer and a tenor singer—in never wearing a hat. They have stuck to it through winter and summer but one of them over the telephone tells me he tips hat check girls just the same. There's zero in courage for you.

If I ever—no titling, please—grow rich I'm going to offer a hand-painted tin mixer or something for the man who goes a year in New York without tipping a taxicab chauffeur. After a thousand stars I did it once. And just as I was entering the door of my hotel the driver ran after me. "You left this in the cab, sir," he said. And he turned over a case and a new pair of gloves.

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