

# MR. CONNOLLY, MUSIC LOVER

By P. G. WODEHOUSE  
Illustrated by JEFFERSON MACHAMER

ARCHIE MOFFAM'S connection with that devastatingly popular ballad, "Mother's Knee," was one to which he always looked back later with a certain pride. "Mother's Knee," it will be remembered, went through the world like a pestilence. In the United States alone, 3,000,000 copies were disposed of.

It seems almost bizarre now to think that there was a time when even one person in the world had not heard "Mother's Knee," but it came fresh to Archie one afternoon in his suite at the Hotel Cosmopolis, where he was cementing his renewed friendship with Wilson Hymack, whom he had first met in the neighborhood of Armeria during the war.

"What are you doing these days?" inquired Wilson Hymack.

"Me?" said Archie. "Well, as a matter of fact, there is what you might call a sort of species of lull in my activities at the moment. But my jolly old father-in-law is busting about, running up a new hotel a bit further downtown, and the scheme is for me to be manager when it's finished. How do you filling in the long hours?"

"I'm in my uncle's office—damn it!" said Wilson Hymack. "It gives me a pain in the gizzard. I want to be a composer."

Archie felt that he should have guessed this. The chappie had a distinctly artistic look. He wore a bow tie and all that sort of thing. His trousers bagged at the knees, and his hair fell about his ears in luxuriant disarray.

"Say! Do you want to hear the best thing I've ever done?"

"Indubitably," said Archie politely. "Write the lyric as well as the melody," said Wilson Hymack, who had already seated himself at the piano. "It's got the greatest title you ever heard. It's a lullaby. It's called 'It's a Long Way Back to Mother's Knee.' How's that?"

"Isn't it a little stale?"

"Stale? What do you mean? There's always room for another song boosting mother."

"Oh, is it boosting mother?" Archie's face cleared. "I thought it was a hit at the short skirts. Why, of course, that makes all the diff. In that case, I see no reason why it should not be ripe, fruity, and prey to all to the mustard. Let's have it."

Wilson Hymack cleared his throat, played a prelude, and began to sing in a weak, high voice:

"One night a young man wandered through the glitter of Broadway. His money he had squandered. For a meal he couldn't pay."

"Tough luck!" murmured Archie, sympathetically.

"He thought about the village where his boyhood he had spent, and yearned for all the simple joys with which he'd been content."

"The right spirit!" said Archie, with approval.

"Oh, right?" Carried away and all that!

"He looked upon the city so frivolous and gay, as he heaved a weary sigh, these words he then did say:

"It's a long way back to mother's knee, mother's knee, mother's knee, mother's knee, back to mother's knee."

Where I used to stand and prattle With my Teddybear and rattle. Oh, those childhood days in Tennessee. They sure look good to me!

"It's along, long way, but I'm gonna start today! I'm going back. Believe me, oh! I'm going back. (I want to go) I'm going—back—back—on the 7-3 To the dear old shack where I used to be. I'm going back to mother's knee."

Wilson Hymack's voice cracked on the final high note, which was of an altitude beyond his powers. He turned to Archie.

"It has many of the earmarks of a sound egg," admitted Archie. "It wants a woman to sing it. A woman who could reach out for that last high note and teach it to take a joke. The whole refrain is working up to that. You need Tetrazzini or some one who would just pick that note off the roof and hold it till the janitor came round to lock up the building for the night."

"I must buy a copy for my wife. Where can I get it?"

"You can't get it! It isn't published. Writing music's the darndest job! You write the biggest thing in years, and you go round trying to get some one to sing it, and they say you're a genius and then shove the song away in a drawer and forget about it."

Archie lighted another cigarette.

"I'm a jolly old child in these matters, old lad," he said, "but why don't you take it direct to a publisher? As a matter of fact, it would be any use to you. I was foregathered with a music-publisher only the other day—a bird by the name of Blumenthal. Why not let me tool you round to the office tomorrow and play it to him?"

"No, thanks. Much obliged; but I'm not going to play that melody in any publisher's office with his hired gang of Tin Pan Alley composers listening at the keyhole and taking notes. I'll have to wait till I can find somebody to sing it. Well, I must be going along. Glad to have seen you again. Sooner or later, I'll take you to hear that high note sung by some one in a way that'll make your spine tingle in knots round the back of your neck."

Hardly had the door closed behind the composer when it opened again to admit Lucille.

"Hullo, light of my soul!" said Archie, rising and embracing his wife. "Where have you been all the afternoon?"

"I've been having tea with a girl down in Greenwich Village. I couldn't get away before. Who was that who went out just as I came along on the passage?"

"Chappie of the name of Hymack. I met him in France. A composer and what not."

"We seem to have been moving in artistic circles this afternoon. The

girl I went to see is a singer. At least, she wants to sing, but gets no encouragement."

"Precisely the same with my bird. He wants to get his music sung, but nobody'll sing it. But I didn't know you knew any Greenwich Village warblers, sunshine of my home. How did you meet this female?"

Lucille sat down and gazed forlornly at him with big gray eyes.

"Archie darling, when you married me, you undertook to share my sorrows, didn't you?"

"The whole jolly business. I'm going to kill two birds with one stone. I've a composer chappie popping about in the background, whose one ambition is to have his pet song sung before a discriminating audience. You have a singer straining at the leash. I'm going to arrange with your egg who leads the orchestra that your female shall sing my chappie's song downstairs one night during dinner. How about it? Is it or is it not a ball of fire?"

"It's a capital idea," said Lucille. "Quite out of the question, of course."

"How do you mean?"

"Don't you know that the one thing father hates more than anything else in the world is anything like a cabaret? People are always coming to him, suggesting that it would brighten up the dinner hour if he had singers and things, and he crushes them

into little bits. He thinks there's nothing that lowers the tone of a place more. He'll bite you in three places when you suggest it to him."

"Ah! But has it escaped your notice, lighting system of my soul, that the dear old dad is not at present in residence? He went off to fish at Lake What's-name this morning."

"But he'll be furious when he finds out."

"But will he find out? I ask you, will he?"

"Of course he will."

"He won't," said Archie confidently. "This scheme is for one night only. By the time the jolly old governor returns, bitten to the bone by mosquitoes, with one small stuffed trout in his suitcase, everything will be over and all quiet once more along the Potomac. The scheme is this: My chappie wants his song heard by a publisher. Your girl wants her voice heard by one of the blighters who get up concerts and all that sort of thing. No doubt you know such a bird you could invite to the hotel for a bit of dinner."

"I know Carl Steinberg. As a matter of fact, I was thinking of writing him about Spectalia."

"Spectalia. The girl, you know. Her name is Spectalia Huskisson. 'It can't be!' said Archie incredulously.

"Why not?" growled Bill.

"Well, how could it?" said Archie, appealing to him as a reasonable man.

"What's wrong with it?" demanded the incensed Bill. "It's a darned sight better name than Archibald Moffam!"

"Don't fight, you two children!" intervened Lucille firmly. "It's a good old middle-west name. Besides, Bill calls her 'Tootles.'"

"Tootles," corrected Bill austerely.

"Oh, yes, 'Tootles.' He calls her 'Tootles.'"

"Young blood! Young blood!" sighed Archie.

"I wish you wouldn't talk as if you were my grandfather."

"You wouldn't speak in that harsh tone of voice if you knew all. William, I have a scheme!"

"Well?"

"Do you know the leader of the orchestra in the restaurant downstairs?"

"I know there is a leader of the orchestra. What about him?"

"A sound fellow. Great pal of mine. I've forgotten his name—"

"Call him 'Tootles,'" suggested Lucille.

"Desist!" said Archie, as a wordless growl proceeded from his stricken brother-in-law. "Temper, your ability with a modicum of reserve. This girl's frivolity is unseemly. Well, I'm going to have a cheat with this chappie and fix it all up."

"Fix what up?"

"The last high note screeched across the room like a shell."

zero-hour when awaiting the first roar of a barrage. He listened mechanically to the conversation of Mr. Blumenthal.

The music-publisher was talking with some vehemence on the subject of labor. A recent printers' strike had bitten deeply into Mr. Blumenthal's soul.

"The more you give 'em, the more they want!" he complained. "There's no pleasing 'em! It isn't only in my business. There's your father, Mrs. Moffam."

"Good heavens! Where?" said Archie, staring.

"I say, take your father's case. He's doing all he knows to get this new hotel of his finished, and what happens? A man gets fired for loafing on his job, and Connolly calls a strike,

which was holding up the construction of his latest effort had plunged Mr. Brewster into a restless gloom. In addition to having this strike on his hands, he had had to abandon his annual fishing trip just when he had begun to enjoy it, and, as if all this were not enough, here was his son-in-law sitting at his table.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

"I was just going to suggest to Mr. Connolly that we should all go up to my suite and talk this business over quietly."

"He says he's the manager of your new hotel," said Mr. Connolly. "Is that right?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Brewster gloomily.

"Then I'm doing you a kindness," said Mr. Connolly, "in not letting it be built."

Suddenly, from the orchestra at the other end of the room, there came a familiar sound, the prelude of "Mother's Knee."

"Who's started a cabaret, Dan?" said Mr. Connolly, in a satisfied voice.

"Cabaret!" Mr. Brewster jumped. He stared unbelievably at the white-robed figure which had just mounted the orchestra dais, and then concentrated his gaze on Archie.

"Is this one of your fool tricks?"

Eyes in this tense moment, Archie found time, almost unconsciously, to admire his father-in-law's penetration and intuition.

"Well, as a matter of fact, it was like this—"

"Say, cut it out!" said Mr. Connolly. "I want to listen."

Miss Huskisson was tall and blond, and constructed on substantial lines. She was a girl whose appearance suggested the old homestead and fried pancakes and pop coming home to dinner after the morning's plowing. Even her bobbed hair did not altogether destroy this impression. She attacked the verse of the song with something of the vigor and breadth of treatment with which, in other days, she had reasoned with refractory mules. Whether you wanted to or not, you heard every word.

In the momentary lull between verse and refrain, Archie could hear the deep breathing of Mr. Brewster involuntarily, he turned to gaze at him once more, and as he did so, he caught sight of Mr. Connolly and passed in astonishment.

Mr. Connolly was an altered man. His whole personality had undergone a subtle change. His face still looked as though new from the living rock, but into his eyes had crept an expression which, in another man, might almost have been called sentimental. Incredibly as it seemed to Archie, Mr. Connolly's eyes were dreamy. There was even in them a suggestion of unshed tears. And when, with a vast culmination of sound, Miss Huskisson reached the high note at the end of the refrain and, after holding it as some storming party, spent but victorious, holds the summit of a hard-won, redoubt, broke off suddenly, in the stillness which followed there proceeded from Mr. Connolly a deep sigh.

Miss Huskisson began the second verse. And Mr. Brewster, seeming to receive from some kind of trance, leaped to his feet.

"Sit down," said Mr. Connolly, in a broken voice. "Sit down, Dan."

"He went back to his mother on the train that very day."

He knew there was no other who could make him bright and gay. He kissed her on the forehead and he whispered, "I've come home."

He told her he was never going any more to roam.

And onward through the happy years, till he grew old and gray. He never once regretted those brave words he once did say:

"It's a long way back to mother's knee."

The last high note screeched across the room like a shell, and the applause that followed was like a shell's bursting. One could hardly have recognized the refined interior of the Cosmopolis dining-room. Fair women were waving napkins; brave men were hammering on the tables with the butt-ends of knives for all the world as if they imagined themselves to be in one of those distressing mid-night-revue places. Miss Huskisson bowed, retired, returned, bowed, and retired again, the tears streaming down her ample face. Over in a corner, Archie could see his brother-in-law applauding strenuously.

"Thirty years ago," said Mr. Connolly, wiping away a tear. "I left me dear old home in the old country—"

"My hotel a bear garden?"

"Frightfully sorry and all that, old companion—"

Mr. Brewster, who was not deeply interested in Mr. Connolly's old mother, continued to splutter inarticulately.

"I want sympathy?"

"Sympathy?"

"Sympathy! And lots of it! She's gone!"

"Gone? Who?"

"Spectalia!"

"How do you mean gone?"

Bill glowered at the tablecloth.

"Gone home. I've just seen her off in a cab. She's gone back to Washington Square to pack. She's catching the ten-o'clock train home. It was that song!" muttered Bill, in a stricken voice. "She says she never realized before she sang it tonight how hollow New York was. She says she's going to give up her career and go back to her mother. What the deuce are you twiddling your fingers for?" he broke off irritably.

"Sorry, old man, I was just counting."

"Counting? Counting what?"

"Birds, old thing. Only birds," said Archie.

(Copyright, 1925.)

**DOG SAVES LIFE OF WOUNDED HERDER**

Laramie, Wyo., March 14.—That Claude Douglas, sheepherder of the Medicine Bow country, is alive today is due entirely to the intelligence and loyalty of his sheep dog, Jack.

While tending his flock near Rock river, Douglas fired at a coyote. In replacing his six-shooter in the holster Douglas accidentally discharged the weapon, the charge breaking his leg. There was no human being within miles, but Douglas, placing his hope in Jack, pinned a note to the sheep dog's collar telling of his injuries and asking for aid.

The dog, reluctant to leave his wounded master, was persuaded to "go to the ranch house" by the pleadings of Douglas. He soon returned with a party that included a physician and surgeon. Douglas was brought to the Ivanson hospital here and will recover.

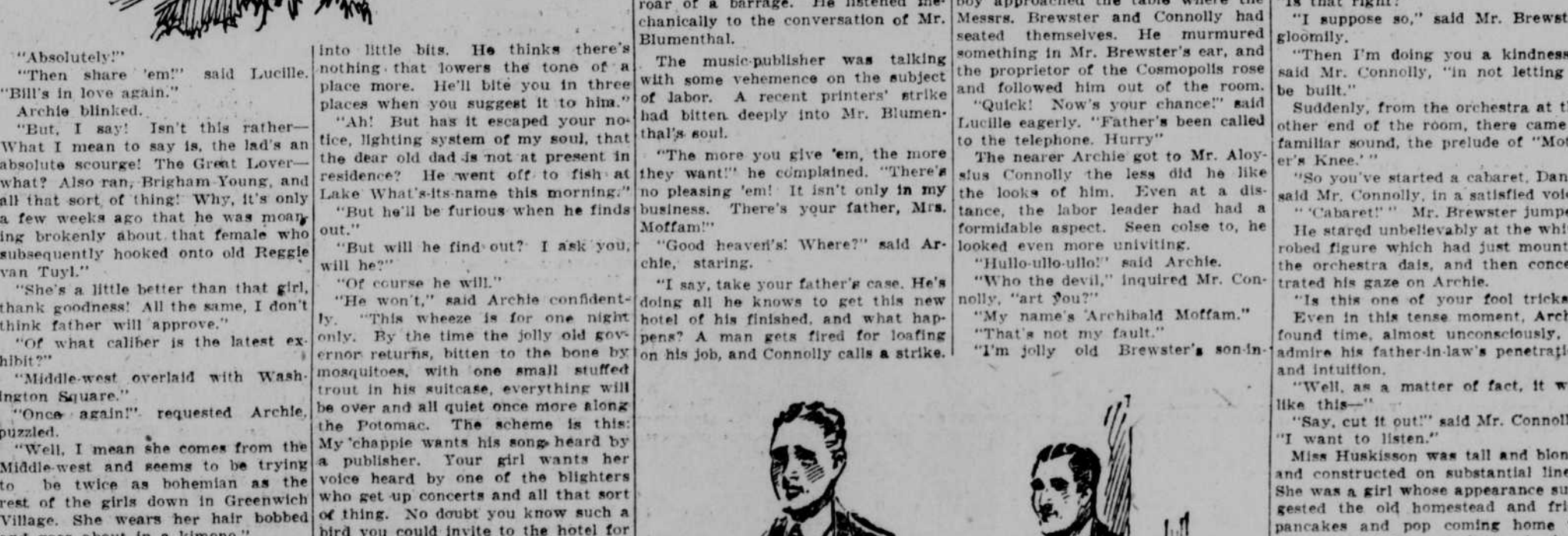
**Bill Would Let Parents See Offspring Spanked**

Indianapolis, March 14.—Ringside seats at school spanking bees would be provided, under a bill introduced in the Indiana legislature.

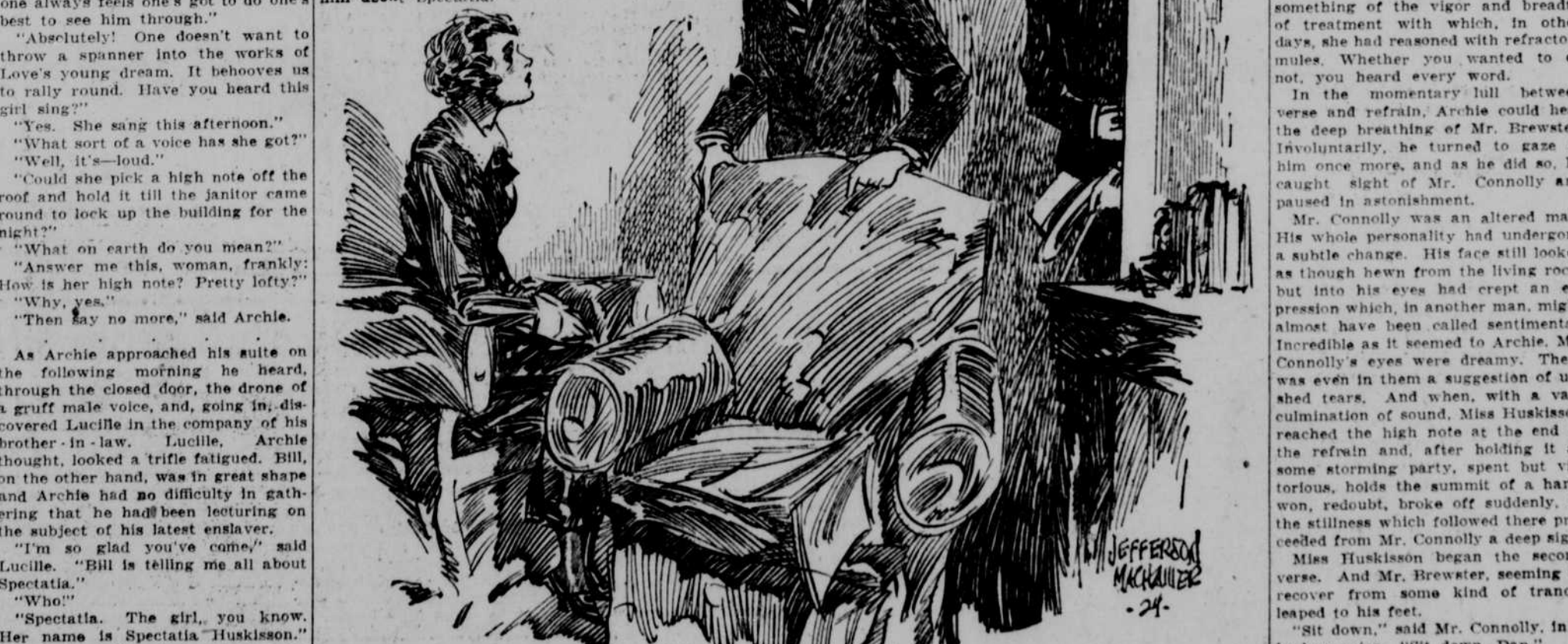
Parents would receive formal notification of the provocation, extent and hour of the corporal punishment, if the measure is passed. In the event they were unable to be present to see the "rod" applied to their offspring on the date set by the teacher, punishment would be deferred until such time as they might attend.



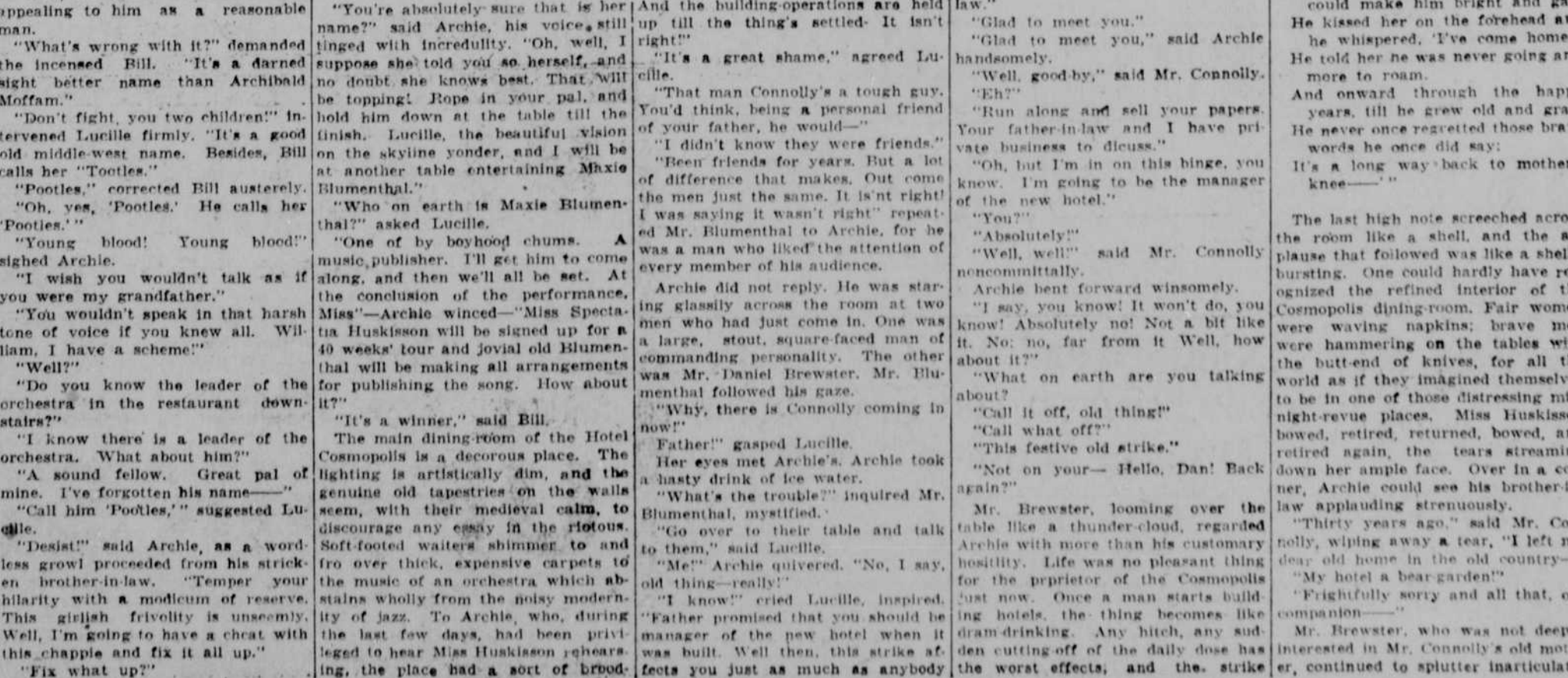
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