

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK.

Copyright, 1924.

(Continued From Yesterday.)

What blunders he would make, damn him! . . . Throughout all the gropings of his rudimentary analysis, Bogert's affection retained its fraternal sensibility. She irritated and charmed him. He wanted her left alone, and he wanted to intrude. Once there had been a violent scene. . . . He was all ways sorry about that. He had been foolish, but the head of the house had some rights. That she should bludge him and push him. . . . It was ghastly. He might have killed her once. What then? He had felt smothered. He had wanted to go and sit beside her bed until she fell asleep. . . .

V.

Before Jo Ellen fell asleep that night, something out of the dark reminded her with a fresh sharpness that Uncle Ben's illness should be taken as a warning. It was true that if Uncle Ben had died, everything would have been changed—extraordinarily changed. Death was tremendously real. Nothing much else seemed to be at all like it. People were always getting excited, yet nothing very exciting ever seemed to happen; nothing real. Getting to work would be real, in a way; realer than school. School was mostly talk. When Marty Simms, before his family moved away, used to mention a book he had been reading, she used to say she was tired of reading. She wondered why she was tired; whether it was because the books didn't seem real enough. Yet some books had been thrillingly real. She went about thinking of them for days. Marty's way of mentioning a story never made her feel the real side of it. She felt that she had become emotional about the wrong things. He was, she supposed, what you would call romantic, and this seemed to result in his wishing her to be no more than a shadow flicker across the ground level of the visible corner. . . . Like a dark ghost, he was sure she was a figure.

It was at night that she was most likely to feel shut in. This was why she so often wanted to go somewhere at night. Her mother called this "gadding." At the moment she would have liked to be at a real dance. Not down at the Dyckman Street Academy. Not with a three-piece family jazz band such as the Tice's had asked her to

hear the following night. Something quite different. . . . huge and glittering, with a sweep of shining floor and a great orchestra that could gather you up like a passionate wind. There would be magical lights, constellations of them, gorgeous clothes. . . . and some man who would understand everything. . . . Everything.

The black lacing of the trees hung like a curtain that would not lift. Loucets, draped in a mesmeric rhythm. The deep sound from the floor below, so deep as to be felt rather than heard, was Uncle Ben snoring.

VI

The morning was humbly heavy, and seemed to carry over in a stinging way the things Jo Ellen had been thinking darkly the night before. Mrs. Rewer's morning ritual had a lively movement. She said she liked to get things done and out of the way. When things were done and out of the way, she was not superior to any form of amusement. Just now, her brother disturbed the ritual and must continue to do so until he was ready to go back to business. Bogert commented freely on all domestic functions. That anything should be done very early that might be done as well a little later, struck him as illogical, as femininely illogical.

"What I think, Jo," he would say, "is that this isn't energy. It's only nervousness."

"I'm not at all anxious about what you think, Ben," Mrs. Rewer would answer cheerfully. "Move your body out on the porch until I get this place straightened up."

"A female Simon Legree," growled Bogert.

Age 12, was a slow boy who gave the impression of desiring to be obedient. But he had deep absorptions, sometimes in a magazine, sometimes in devices involving tools, often in hurried preparations to go out. When his mother issued a request, he said, "In a minute," or "Right away, Ma." The repetition of the request was like a sharper, and Billy would emerge with signs of knowing only from the tone that the request had been made before. Very often he would disappear without remembering his "in a minute" bargain. He was clever in explaining the omissions.

"You're the greatest explainer that ever happened at 12," said his mother.

Billy's notion of Jo Ellen was that she wouldn't stick at anything. If his sister couldn't do a thing quickly she wouldn't do it at all. "It's got to be him," he said, "or you won't bother."

The ring of the early morning's housework rather suited Jo Ellen. She was full of intentions, as her mother well knew, and the after-breakfast hustle favored any subsequent personal plans. Getting things done and out of the way was particularly congenial when she felt restless. She could run restlessly to the dress she would make. She always liked dress when she was making it. When she was through with it she was not so sure. Of course, it had to be cheap. What she normally delighted in was to be found to find yourself earning enough money to have all sorts of things you wanted to do. Enough money. All the trouble came back to that. Enough money was supposed to spoil some people. Jo Ellen knew in detail all the ways in which it would not spoil her. Nothing was plainer than the fact that she would be improved. It would be noticeable from the very beginning. If she had enough money by nightfall she would be improved before she could get to bed. Naturally this would mean that her mother would have enough money, too.

"Well," said her mother presently, noticing a box of figures in the figure at the shaded end of the porch, "what are you wishing now?"

Jo Ellen was not startled by the accuracy of this surmise. She knew her mother's theory that one child was always explaining and the other always wishing.

"I was wishing," said Jo Ellen, "that I had a job."

"I see," said her mother. "I thought maybe you might have a new wish." The sarcasm was to be expected. There was always a flare when this subject came up. Jo Ellen had learned that she was ungrateful. Huge sacrifices were made to give her an education. Uncle Ben, swinging his arms, had been talking about college. It was being ungrateful to ignore all these efforts for her good. "I'm not ungrateful. It doesn't mean what you say it means." There was no end to the argument.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Rewer had been shaken in her certainties by the phoed, as her daughter had been reminded, that everything hinged upon the welfare of the busy man who had gone so close to the brink. Ben had theories he never could back up. He was a big talker. College, for instance. That was just funny. Yet he was returning to business, and there was no reason why Jo Ellen shouldn't finish high school. Another winter would do it. She was nearly 17. This

was her last summer of being a girl if a girl could only know. . . . "I can't stop wishing," said Jo Ellen coldly. "And spoiling your last good summer."

"There was the drag of everything that had been said over and over again. . . .

Later in the morning Myrtle Fleck was on the porch, and Mrs. Rewer heard a lot of laughing and whistling.

bering gossip. Mrs. Rewer regarded Myrtle as particularly silly—as boy-crazy and snaky in her ways, full of funny tricks. Not to be trusted. Her giggle had something sensual in it.

When Jo Ellen disappeared in the afternoon Mrs. Rewer wondered whether Myrtle. . . .

But Jo Ellen was quite alone after Billy had persuaded her to behold something in the cave at the head of

the hollow. The cave was after a meeting place for the Glee Club, and was consecrated to piratical secrets. Jo Ellen wandered down into the hollow where, in summer, you seemed to touch the bottom of nothing. A wilderness. Trees, bushes, bits of wild color, tangled places, spots of sunlight. On the west the sheer rocks upon which, above the spring, the Indians had scratched the Spouting Devil. Over all, silence. The loneliest

acres in New York. Yes, a great place in which to be miserable, if you wanted that. And not a bad place for thinking without interruption. But Jo Ellen found that she didn't want to think there. The silence was like something pressing down on your head. Once she could be there, without resentment, for an hour, mooning around or simply doing nothing. Evidently this meant that she was older. Also it must mean

that she was through. The withered trunks, the ghost of vines that had been, the broken bits of sapling, and the matted bits of another day all seemed to be whispering "dead" and this was quite horrible. . . . enough to make you scream.

She swung about and began running through the bushes and across a slope that reached away from the paths, which involved vaulting over a prostrate tree and

crawling over a briary arch. Beyond was the grass-grown foundation of a house that had burned and a clearing that once had been a garden. Still higher was a dismantled shack and the scattered stones of an old wall. These obstacles were a real adventure when you took them at high speed. The end of the sprint came before the summer kitchen of the empty Simms house.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBS

LINGER AWHILE.

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess



Barney Google and Spark Plug

BARNEY "BANKS" ON SUNSHINE.

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

THE ANSWER IS EASY

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hobart



New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. MINTYRE.

New York, June 27. — Thoughts while strolling around New York: Jefferson Market Court. Fat bailiffs. Assistant coroners. Patrol wagons. Weeping women and white-faced men. The rattle of cell locks. And the cacophonous whoop of drunks.

Pool halls and near-beer saloons. With their flashy dressed and clapping patrons. A freak show—strong women and skeleton men. And a barker with a rattlesnake belt. Cigar stores where old men sit and watch the world go by.

About the only section of town where derbies are not on trombones. Tough and barnacled sailors off fishing smacks. Hunting for some thrill they will save from Fluno butchers shaved appropriately to a siren red. Spindly-legged children who play in gutters.

Ukuleles now selling for 50 cents. And all Hawaiians have gone back to Waikiki. Bootleggers bragging about just returning from Bimini. But making their bogus stuff in still tubs. Little grocery stores that sell sell loose strips of licorice.

A chat at the curb. A suicide. Ugh! Back again to Broadway. And the unceasing glitter. Paul White-man is getting stouter. And that tiny mustache must be sapping his strength. Fannie Hurst. And her sickly coiffed hair.

Flo Ziegfeld has abandoned the lavender collar for the russet bowtie. A tiny magic shop run by a man with gleaming eyes and brilliant beard. Eddie Dunn, George Cohan's Man-Friday. Celebrated for loud vests. A scissor grinder who sings as he works.

Tanned and handsome polo players. Roadsters hitting it off for the beaches. Everybody in holiday garb for the week end. O. O. a chaparral on the mountain side. And perhaps a jug of something or other. Dime novels are coming back. Does it mean a movie wave?

They caught Jungle Joe the other day. He was a foil for pickpockets and has been working at his trade for years. Jungle Joe was an innocent appearing Italian who carried a string of blown-up brightly colored balloons. He was to be found about railroad terminals. He ran with a pack. It was his job in crowds to release balloons and as the crowds looked up the "dips" would lift the wallets and watches from innocent eyes. His last spot was in Grand Central. When the crowds in the big golden blue-celled station were the thickest Joe would release his balloons and give a cry of despair. As they floated upward, the pickpockets reaped their harvest.

One of the cleverest of station detectives, by the way, is a hunchback, who goes about with a bootblack box. He is able to mingle in almost any crowd without being noticed. He gives the impression he does not understand English.

Bisecting the seethe of late afternoon crowds one is able to see all the latest facial colorings. They appear to run the chromatic scale. There are faces tinted red, yellow, clown white, pale green, a light brown, and even a purple. But the best touch of the season is a girl who gives a gilt touch to the lobe of her ears.

Yet these girls who try to brighten their faces so gaily give themselves away with their eyes. Life seems drained out of their looks. Somehow you get the idea that they are just trying to get away from something or other and don't know how.

(Copyright, 1924.)

There's at Least One in Every Convention

By Briggs ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield

