

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK. Copyright, 1924.

(Continued From Yesterday.)

"Yet there is a dramatic excitement about being cast for a gorgeously antithetical part. To be indicated by a superb irony, for the character of the worm. Like the great Cannerton, to be, for a moment, the Early Worm, waiting to be splendidly devoured. What a joy—a kind of microscopic cataclysm—piercingly exquisite—the very radius of the ridiculous—the ultimate white center of humor. And you couldn't be sure you saw it unless you had a few drinks. Ever notice that? The defiance of drink, itself a liberation—"

"You're taking a big chance," suggested Jo Ellen with a look toward Eberly's office.

"Thank God! A big chance. That's me. Something stupendous. Like writing a good play. But don't divert me. A drink loosens the inhibitions of caution by which all of us are overlaid. At the fourth or fifth drink we shake off the shell and step forth in the droll and shimmering of self soul alcoholically cleansed."

"I don't see how you get anything done," said Jo Ellen.

"Done? Nothing is ever done. The rapture is in the effort. Creation is an unfinished dream. Look at humanity. A rough sketch of something still awaiting objective coherence. Man, in his present outline, is only an impulsive experiment. Flippant outline, a biological note not yet to be transcribed. I don't blame the Creator at all. Any artist will tell you that the joyous sketch is more entertaining than anything he is ever able to make of the thing afterward. Take me. Why should I be finished? You, for example, adore me as I am—"

"I don't adore you as you are," declared Jo Ellen.

"It doesn't matter what you say. You have to say that. A girl who didn't deny would be dangerous. Gentle denial is what makes her charming. Of course, she's dangerous anyway. Back in the days when a man apologized to his stenographer for saying 'damn,' my respected secretary had a secretary in those days—denied adoring me. But what did she up and do? Married me—when I wasn't looking. Made the poor thing a lot of trouble. Her present husband—"

"I wish you'd stop talking nonsense," pleaded Jo Ellen. "I'm awfully busy. And if you had any sense you wouldn't see the chief today."

"Ah! my dear! There are so many things I wouldn't risk if I had any sense! And if I had any sense they wouldn't marry me the way they do."

Cannerton seemed to be seized by a profound curiosity.

"Why do you suppose they do marry me?"

Jo Ellen bent over her machine. "The must like talk," she said. "I should think a phonograph would be cheaper."

Cannerton shook his head with an effort of being deadly serious. But he brightened again.

"And yet, can't you see the tribulation? To marry a man for himself alone—what is there in that to be compared with marrying him for his art? You cheer me. You intoxicate me!"

"You don't need that," laughed Jo Ellen. "Be good, and go away."

Nevertheless, she usually liked Cannerton. She liked him better than Brintell, one of the most favored of the actors, who never said anything either foolish or offensive, but whose precise clothes and starchy infection made her feel creepy. Brintell came in three times during the afternoon.

Eberly arrived so late that no one reached his apartment. After a very brief greeting he read many letters and dictated many others. Jo Ellen had planned with Marty her first home-coming at six or so, with the celebrating dinner as soon thereafter as possible. It was seven o'clock when Eberly asked her if it would be convenient for her to come back at eight.

II.

"Of course," said Marty, after Jo Ellen's breathless explanation. "I thought you'd been hit by a hospital. I wondered how I would hear."

"And you're getting hungrier and hungrier."

"Not when I began to talk—"

"It was his first play," called Jo Ellen from the kitchen. "I heard about a Russian horse who's on his way to America to race my sparky and by accident—"

"By eight. He seldom does that. He seemed very nervous."

"He'll make you nervous, trying to eat and get back in an hour."

Marty had laid out the table things. "I don't know whether I have the forks and spoons right," he said.

"We won't worry about the art," Jo Ellen murmured over the chops. "I might have called up and told you to put these on."

"That would have been a good idea unless you were afraid I'd spoil 'em."

"Naturally he didn't think of my going home."

"To a husband."

"A worrying husband."

"Guess he's like the rest. Just thinks about himself."

"He thought I'd slip out to a restaurant. He has his own troubles."

"You excuse him a lot."

"You have to be an excuser," Jo Ellen said as she carried in the plates, "or you won't get anywhere."

Marty ruminated upon the word as he followed Jo Ellen's quick movements.

"I guess that's so."

"There! Jo Ellen had everything ready at last. "And it's only half past. I can get back in ten minutes—twelve, anyway."

"Looks good, doesn't it?" exclaimed Marty, wheeling adroitly to his place.

"It's beating the game to have it at all," Jo Ellen laughed excitedly. "Everything happens the way we don't expect it."

There was a trace of bitter in Marty's tone. He added: "I mustn't count on your getting back home tonight at a particular time."

"Better not," Jo Ellen returned. "But you can't lose me."

Marty repeated his gesture of reaching out to stroke one of her hands. "I feel," he said, "if I lost you each time you go out..."

It was a quarter of nine before Eberly came back. For most of the interval Jo Ellen was alone. When she went to the window she felt the throb of being lonely under a glare. The while spectacle seemed to mean pairing. An infinity of couples, a seething, phosphorescent stream of life, eddied in and out of Broadway. The froth of it had a way of splitting up finally into couples, all sorts of queer couples when you came to think them out. You got to wondering what any man could see in a figure that moved along alone whether there was the other one somewhere, and how they would meet. Some of them might be eager; others might be escaping. You never could tell. Generally it was the woman who was waiting somewhere. . . . It was never likely that it would be the man. There were girls alone. Sometimes you would see one powdering her nose, cocking her head before the bit of mirror in the midst of the turmoil. There was no one to notice, unless the costume were extraordinarily and the lips were terrifically distended. If you wanted to be noticed it was easy to have your wish. If you wanted to be left alone you could have that wish, too. The facilities for loneliness were enormous. The very expectation of couples sharpened the situation of the lonesome one.

Shaffer came in with an alert casualness. "Boss not here yet?" he asked, knowing the answer. "Just the night I didn't want to hang around. A hit party at the house. Wife's sister and her husband on their honeymoon trip. Showing them the old town and

so on. You know how honeymooners are. Giggling. Strangle holds and 'dearie' stuff. Funny. They think the baby's a knockout. I know the wife's sister wants to see a few snapshots. Orville's rather cautious about such things. Doesn't want the bride to be corrupted. He's a religion

gious Elk. What kind of a show do you think newlyweds ought to see?" "Ask the bride," said Jo Ellen. "O Fanny'd never tell me. Of course, it would be the kind she wouldn't ask for. I've got to guess. "Some good musical show," Jo Ellen suggested.

"They'll have to have one—so's they can come out humming and holding hands. But Orville—he'll want a play." "All you've got to find out," said Jo Ellen, "is what sort of play religious Elks like."

"Quit your joshing," protested Shaffer. "I hoped you'd come across with a good steer. Just imagine yourself newly married."

"I can't," and Jo Ellen began to wonder whether even Shaffer might notice her color. "You would be better at imagining that."

"Me? I'm an old married man and

father. Besides, Kitty was in the profession. We're both hard boiled. You couldn't go by us."

"Be safe—make it a clean play."

"Said like a woman of the world. You're right. Something homey."

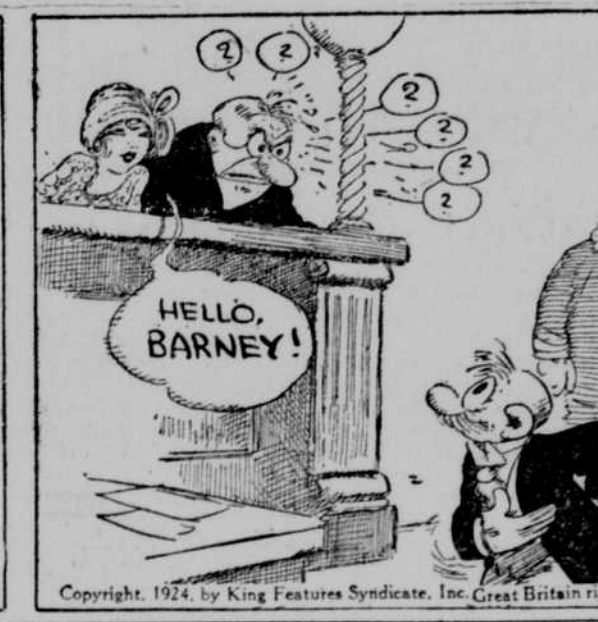
(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess

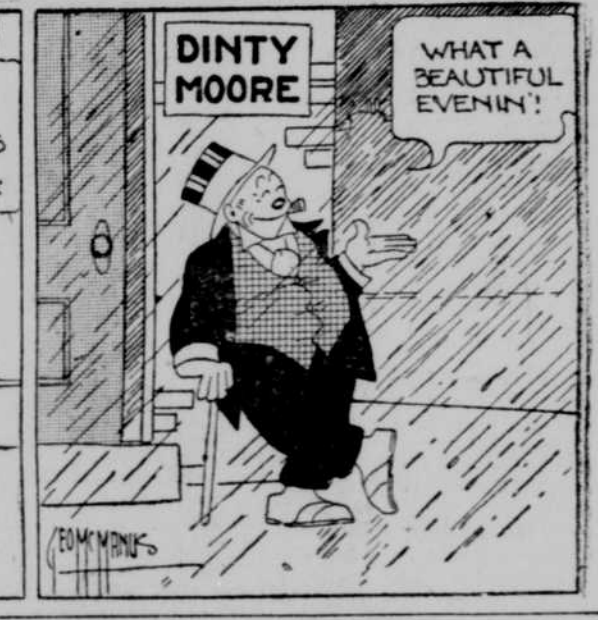
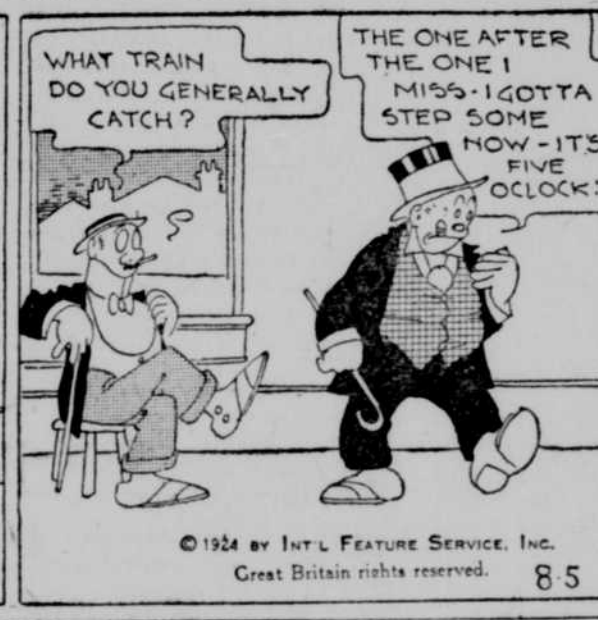
THE NEBBS



Barney Google and Spark Plug THE JUDGE REACHES A QUICK DECISION.



BRINGING UP FATHER



JERRY ON THE JOB



THE DAYS OF REAL SPORT



THE GRAVY YARD

LESSONS FOR TWO.

ABIE THE AGENT



New York - Day by Day -

By O. O. MCINTYRE.

New York, Aug. 5.—Gray's drug store on Broadway and Forty-third street is a monument to a business romance of the Rialto. It is no different from the hundred and one other chain drug stores selling everything from pins to lawnmowers, save in the side door entrance on Forty-third street.

This entrance leads to one of the most picturesque auction places to be found anywhere. Two hours before the theaters open nightly and at matinees the unsold seats are dumped there to be sold at cut rate prices. The initiated go there instead of to the ticket speculator.

The side door leads to a long ramp which in turn leads up to the auction counters. A dozen clerks with charts of the various attractions call out the seats that are left. There are only one or two "sell outs" in town so it is always possible to get a seat at cut rates.

Four or five policemen are on hand to keep order among the crowds. The auctioneers call out their seats and hands fly up to signify purchase. In the beginning the cut rate auction room was a mere hole in the wall, operated by Joseph Le Blang, king of the cut rate ticket men.

Le Blang wields a big power in the theatrical world. He has been angel for many plays. He has bolstered up many productions, nursing collapse, and theater men depend upon him to fill their balconies and seats in the rear downstairs.

It is said "Le Blang can make or break a show." When his business began to grow he tried to get more room in the drug store but could not. It was the most desirable corner for his operations, so he finally bought the drug store and enlarged it.

The drug store in itself is a prosperous business, but it is only secondary to the cut rate auctioneering that goes on in the rear. It is said "his business alone makes its owner a clear profit of something like a half million dollars a year."

There are 5,000 young men in New York training at gymnasiums in the hope of becoming future world champions of the pugilistic arena. Most of them make a vicious living as "preliminary boys" at fights where more noteworthy stars shine. They wear sweaters and caps and talk out of the side of the mouth. A "scrap" to them is not work but play. They learned the art of rough and tumbling fighting on the sidewalks where they were raised. They take a "sock on the jaw" with a laugh.

There is a young actor, one way, by the name of Jay Gould—not a relative of the illustrious family by that name—who eight times a week in a musical show receives enough "socks on the jaw" to fill an ordinary man. He is one of the fighters in the most realistic prize fight scene ever staged in New York. There is no fakery. For two rounds he is hammered in such a way the ladies turn their heads and the men rise in their seats with enthusiasm. He appears in the next act—having won the girl—and those who expected to see a humiliated face, mouset eye and cauliflower ear instead saw perfectly flawless features topped by an exquisite staccato comb effect.

It is being shown more and more that the masterpieces in playwriting are neglected. Two plays, turned down by every manager in town, were produced by private capital and developed into big successes. The playwright's name, not the play, is the big factor among passengers. They seem to have an idea that the man who has once written a successful play will always have a following even though his after efforts are of a very low grade.

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