

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK.

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(Continued From Yesterday.)

"Ellen!"

"It was her mother, whispering the name so the whole house wouldn't be pained."

"I heard something," Mrs. Rewer added, "lying there awake—thinking about you. Wasn't that strange? What's happened? Are you alone?"

They walked softly, and when the light flared, the mother's eyes were alert. Jo Ellen wondered if she still bore signs of being, or having been, drunk.

"I was at a party," she said, "and it seemed a little easier to disturb this house—easier than the other one."

If she could get to bed before having to expound anything she would be better off. The theory might have worked itself out if Mrs. Rewer hadn't put those strong arms of hers about the little young figure.

Crying, with her head in her mother's lap, just like the other brides she had thought of as so silly. She couldn't see her mother's face when she came to the top of the story. She could only feel the tightening of the hands and a faint taut tremor in the knees.

"And I stood it all," she said—aloud of it—very beautifully, but I stood it—because it came along with everything, and I wanted to be a part of it. If the world broke him, well, I had to stand that. I had to take my share. It was the thing that got me to where I married him—that limp. You know that. Yes, I know I said before he went away that I would, but if he hadn't come with the hurt—I guess it made him seem pathetic or something, so that it was hard to admit changing. I don't believe I did change. I never really cared enough for him to marry him. I ought never to have said I would. But when I thought the war—and it wasn't the war! The war never put a mark on him!"

"It was the war."

Jo Ellen's head came up with a fling.

"No!" she cried so loudly that her mother raised a hand in warning, "it wasn't the war. Just a beastly matter of a woman. Can't you see why he never wanted to talk about his surgeons? He knew he couldn't get any government help here on an injury like that. If the thing came to being looked up... And we were fooled—"

"He's stricken all the same—for life."

"You're as furious as I am," Jo Ellen muttered bitterly. "You want to smooth me out."

In the white nightgown her mother looked like a matronly angel who wept for the miseries of the world.

"I'm not liking him for it," said Mrs. Rewer steadily, "or saying that it wasn't rotten—a man who had a wife pledged! It was horrible. But it smothered him. The punishment's been laid on pretty heavy, without us."

"I know. But why should I be smothered, too? I was willing to take my share of what the war did. Why should I have to share this? It isn't fair. The whole game of war isn't fair to women. Everybody knows that. And one of the reasons it isn't fair—but what's the use of going into that—going into all that a man may bring home besides fighting marks? It's all war."

"I see," Jo Ellen emitted the beginning of a hysterical laugh. "Bullets and women. And the hero comes home—to another woman. Wonderful arrangement! If there's any of him left, the leavings are for her. And she must be grateful that there is anything left. Even if he looked the same as ever, she couldn't tell what had happened to him, could she? She'd have to go on having a wife—like a ghost, she must kiss bruises and lie about them."

Whatever he does she mustn't hate him."

Her mother was silent. When Jo Ellen looked at her she saw no theory or argument, but suffering. A whiteness had come over her face. There was a desperation in the fixity of her eyes, as if she were tracing the outlines of an issue that couldn't be met. She was the mother. She must explain life, she must make Providence plausible, she must take bravely in the dark to prove that it has no ghosts, she must kiss bruises and lie about them.

What Jo Ellen saw stung her afresh.

"And after all that, there's Mrs. Simms. She isn't the war."

"No, damn her!"

This was not like a matronly angel, but it was out. Constriction seemed to bring the blood back into Mrs. Rewer's face. Perhaps it was a relief to get this said at last, even if she felt belittled. A damn was a bad example. But she had often thought of Mrs. Simms with a damn, and a stricken Jo Ellen pried the thing out of her.

"I know," exclaimed Mrs. Rewer. "She treats you as if you did it."

"There could be no conflict over this."

Suddenly Mrs. Rewer asked, "Do you suppose she—she knows?"

"The eyes met. 'Knows—what?'"

"Knows how Marty was hurt."

"I don't know. I haven't had time to think. They stick close. Probably she does know."

"I wonder," Mrs. Rewer's hands became quiet again. Presently they clenched. "It would serve her right if we had the marriage annulled."

At sight of the quick flush in Jo Ellen's face, the mother groped her way back from the brink.

"I guess I don't quite mean that. We mustn't let that woman make us—"

Jo Ellen stood up.

"I'm going to bed."

Mrs. Rewer got to her feet responsively. "Well sleep on it. I'm not sure that your room is quite as it ought to be."

"I won't care," said Jo Ellen.

The parting for the night was stealthy. At the end, the two clung humbly together for several moments.

III.

For a time it seemed to Jo Ellen that the awful word "annulled" would keep her awake for the rest of the night. But a heavy, immense and peremptory, blotted out all implications. Even thought of the morning was left unfinished.

The great fact of the morning was that Jo Ellen slept until nearly nine o'clock, when Uncle Ben and her grandmother had gone.

"I took a chance," said Mrs. Rewer quietly, "looked to me as if you needed it."

Jo Ellen was firm about the necessity. "I must be at the office by ten. This means bustling. She put on a dress she had not taken downtown, and hurried her breakfast."

Mrs. Rewer withheld the questions she had ready. At going away time the principal one was answered.

"I'm coming back here," said Jo Ellen. "Until I get straightened out."

"If they telephone," her mother began, "the meaning of 'they' was not obscure."

"Won't it do that I'm not feeling well?"

"I think it will. It'll have to do. But you're feeling a little better?"

"A little."

The telephone call came to the office, soon after her arrival. The voice was Marty's.

"Uncle Ben's been here," Marty stammered. "Uncle Ben?"

Of course. It was like Uncle Ben, plunging through to the trouble point. "He's been here. He'll—I've told him everything. Everything. I want—but over the phone—"

"Don't," admonished Jo Ellen. "You'll be home to dinner?"

"I can't tell when I'll be home."

There was a muttered sound as if a struggle to be silent, of words swallowed desperately. With this contact, tenuous as a wire, the two flickered for a moment. Marty was first to hang up the receiver. It could be this way—if you chose, anything might be blotted out—or seem to be, for a little while—until thoughts began wedging their way in, until you began wondering... about yourself, until pictures of yourself, pulled away, standing quite apart from everything, began to form themselves in the clutter, and you found yourself taking apprehensive breaths, perhaps with a kind of guilty awe.

The interval gave time for speculation upon the attitude of Uncle Ben. No hint of what this might be appeared in his later telephone call. He wanted to see her, at lunch time or at the end of the day. He would wait for her at either time. Delay would matter. "I have all the time there is," he said to her.

She told him she was returning to Inwood and preferred the going-home hour. Under the circumstances it meant she had her miserable that Eberly should keep her until nearly seven o'clock. It would have been better to have had Uncle Ben come into the office, instead of letting him hover in the foyer of the building, though he had no complaint, but only a comment on the extraordinary interest (ingenueness of the Jewish boy who presided over the tobacco stand.

(To Be Continued Monday.)

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THE NEBBES

WELL, THAT'S DIFFERENT.

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess



Barney Google and Spark Plug

JAIL MEANS NOTHING TO BARNEY NOW.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeek



New York Day by Day

By O. O. McINTYRE.

New York, Aug. 23.—Broadway calls them "fadeouts." They refer to the former beauties of the stage who are being shunted to the background—eclipsed by age or fading beauty. Every cafe has its sprinkling of them nightly.

For the Broadway lights are the lights that never grow dim. They are always alluring. There is one who used to twinkle in the front row. One night there was Westchester joyride and a smashup and she left the hospital with a deep scar on her cheek.

There is another, still in her 20s, whose beauty wilted under the fast pace. She was once the featured beauty of a noted revue. And her last engagement was in a Seventh avenue cabaret. She affects a lorgnette and gapes haughtily about the world that once acclaimed her.

Nothing is so tragic to them as to lose the glare of the spotlight. They fight strenuously to retain their beauty and as a result their faces are hideous examples of the cosmetic artifice. They are like prize fighters who never believe they are through. Their chief assets are beauty and youth. Each is usually ravaged in a mire of dissipation. When they lose beauty they find themselves hopelessly out when they call. Men who once paid nightly court at their feet have "other engagements."

So their only companions are those pummeled young fops who will dine with anyone who pays the check. A strange crew—these Broadway dancers who live by their wits. As Willie Rogers says you look at them and just know they ride horseback side saddle and sit on the floor to put on their box.

Two of the "fadeouts" are former professional dancers. Once they floated out like puff balls to riotous applause. Now wherever they go Broadway gives them its pitying glance and shrug.

Since two dramatic critics in New York decided on stage careers and appeared in monologues there has been much good-natured kidding by other producers. One musical revue for instance advertised: "Positively not a dramatic critic in the cast."

A breath of the old clipper days in New York is lost to the ground in the Seaman's Institute. Here one finds many of the old salts of the days that are gone. They still retain their rambling sea gait. They smoke short, stubby pipes and their wrinkled faces have not yet lost the tang and tan of the sea.

James Swinnerton, the comic artist, is in town for his annual vacation from Arizona. Ten years ago Swinnerton was told by the foremost specialists to get his house in order, that he had only a few weeks to live—both lungs were affected. In fact when he left Denver he was told he had but two weeks more. Always the fatalist he accepted the verdict. In one of the bars in a small Arizona town he met an old gambler who was mourning over a lost love. He was in his cups and wept copiously. Swinnerton was amused and impressed and said: "Partner, how would you like to mourn for me? I've got only a few days more and have no friends in this part of the country."

"If you hecker me well, I'll mourn you like a lost brother," was the reply and Swinnerton and the old gambler went up in the hills to live in a tent. I saw Swinnerton the other day in a magazine editor's office. He is a picture of perfect health. The old gambler, by the way, is still with Swinnerton and works on his ranch near Silver King, N.M.

On New Howery near Oliver street is a little Jewish cemetery said to be the oldest Jewish burial ground in North America. It once occupied what is now Chatham Square. The grant for the graveyard was issued by Governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1656.

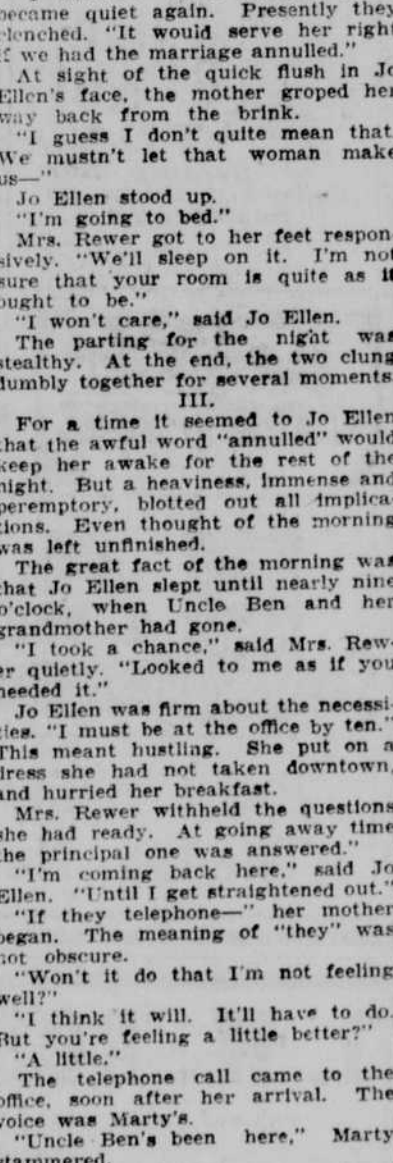
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BRINGING UP FATHER

Registered U. S. Patent Office

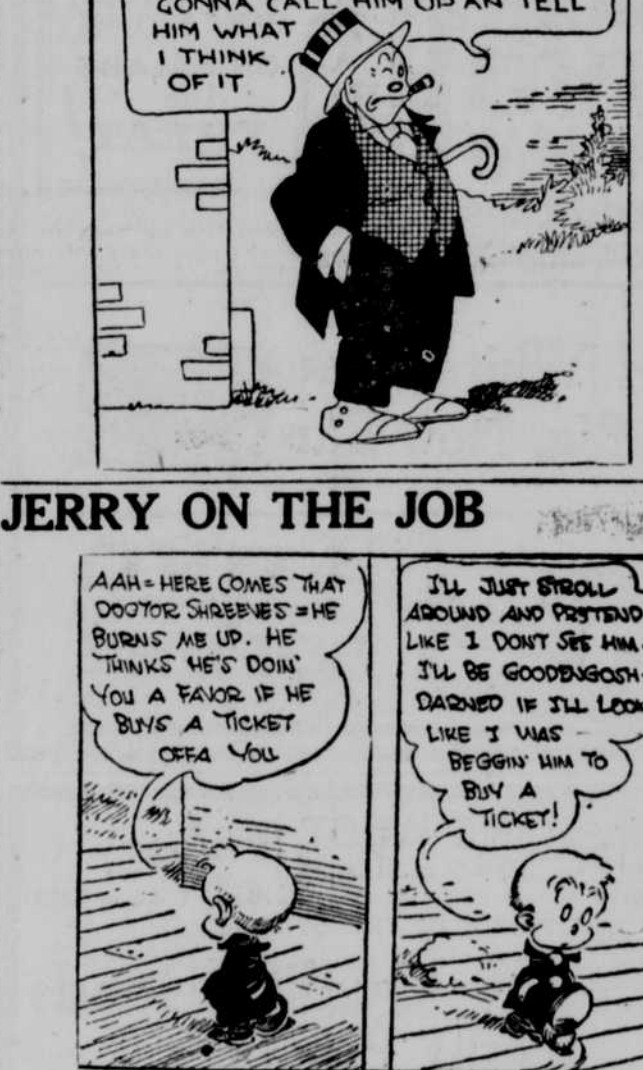
JERRY ON THE JOB

SEE JIGGS AND MAGGIE IN FULL PAGE OF COLORS IN THE SUNDAY BEE



JERRY ON THE JOB

WHERE IS THERE A TELEPHONE IN THIS BUM TOWN?



JERRY ON THE JOB

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.



ABIE THE AGENT

Then He Thought It Over.



Me and Mine

By Briggs



ABIE THE AGENT

Then He Thought It Over.

