

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK.

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(Continued From Yesterday.)

Jo Ellen looked resentfully into the darkening uppour. Only a little over a hundred yards to her objective. It was absurd to be marooned so short a distance from the end of the journey. She was not very good at waiting. But you couldn't bully a storm into giving you room to run. If there was even a partial pause she would run. Perhaps there was a pause, though it might have been in the noise only, and she leaped down the steps and up the slope toward Broadway—a swift dash, with head down. The eddies of rain wrapped her, drenched her stockings, beat down her neck, slapped her bent face until she had to slow down for breath. Her hair, cold and stringy, clung to her face like a thick, stinging veil. . . . And here at last was the door, with a man and a girl huddled in the hallway, and Mike, the elevator porter, saying: "Hi, mother! But you got it good." Tommy, running her up, had an oblique grin for her condition. "As if you fell in," he said.

Back at the roof door, her face dripping.

VI.

"O Jo Ellen!"

Marty, with a red look, excited, clutching at her wetness, pulling her down to meet his raised lips. He was kissing her. Leaving rain on his smoky face. She shivered and hurried to rid herself of the clothes. He wanted to help, and rolled away after towels.

"Mother's laid up," he said. "A cold or something."

Mrs. Gorman, the chief of the cleaning women, was cooking dinner. "There's a smell of onions," Jo Ellen detected the smell of onions. The smell came with a special sharpness after an open-air bath.

Marty intruded with clumsy efforts at assistance.

"I've got you towels," he repeated. "He wanted to touch her body. She shivered again."

"You're chilled up," he said. "I'll get you a little whiskey."

"No," she made it clear that she didn't want whiskey. Whiskey made her think of the way that looked. She knew by this time that some one in the building was enabling him to secrete a bottle of his own, to be quite independent of the parental supply.

"The exciting ordeal was going into his mother's bedroom. The thing had to be done. To show a decent interest."

Mrs. Simms had the effect of leaving her in bed. The glance cut clean through.

"I hope you're feeling better," said Jo Ellen.

"I'm not."

"Have you had the doctor?"

"No."

"Don't you think we ought to call him?"

"I didn't know—"

"You're very much interested all of a sudden."

Being hated—it hurt to be hated. Probably that part couldn't be changed. If she gave up everything to be a house drudge, Jo Ellen was sure that she would only be hated.

"How could you? Gallivanting. I'd rather you didn't pretend."

"But Mother Simms—"

"Save yourself. I've got help."

Differently. Probably the most awful hates were of people who lived to gether slowly, hour after hour, day after day. There were stories of people penned together, on an island, or in a prison, who began as real friends and ended as haters. Marty, watching her, and getting ready to say something, was just now not busy hating. He was waiting for the opportunity to speak of Uncle Ben and that that lay bare she saw her. But something was growing in him. Something was growing in her. What was it? It couldn't be like the thing that Mrs. Simms had done. Not that. That was horrible. The closing-in thing that enveloped you like the storm.

The storm, which she had forgotten to hear, must have been itself at last. The street rivers would be ebbing in the dark.

Simms senior greeted her with an obvious effort to seem the same as usual. He knew of Uncle Ben. The three sat at table. Mrs. Gorman brought in the onion-flavored steak, and fussed with the arrangement of something on a tray for Mrs. Simms.

Marty spoke about the extraordinary way the storm came up, straight over Long Island, or say from the sound. It was a whopper. And Jo Ellen was soaked.

"To be had," said the father.

Presently Daniel Simms was talking about an old actor who had died. He expected Jo Ellen to be interested in anything about the stage. It was a pity, he thought, that they didn't have plays like "Squatter Sovereignty" any more. And there was Hoyt's "Brass Monkey." When he was a youngster they had a lot of plays like that with real fun in them. Not stuff like they had now. Good clean fun. The first shows he ever went to were at Tony Pastor's. He remembered Lillian Russell when she was the queen of the bunch. A great girl, Lillian. And there was Lester Wallack and old man Sothorn. For many places, there was Booth, and old vinyl. But Ned Hartigan—"O boy!" exclaimed Simms. "He was the one!"

Jo Ellen said she had met a nice old man—who he was now a doorkeeper—who told her he had acted with Hartigan.

"Is that so?"

Mrs. Simms' sharp voice reminded Mrs. Gorman of a forgotten element of her meal.

His mother's voice produced a twitch in Marty as if by a hidden wiring. Jo Ellen saw how the enthusiasm for his food gave place now, and again to thought of the speech he must make later on. The alteration produced a confusion in his throat. His uneasiness was pitiful.

The father's uneasiness had another cast.

After dinner Arnold Pearson came. His seemed the only face that did not threaten—unless you considered Mrs. Gorman. He worried not advise, or dodge, or explain. He brought out a little package from his pocket.

"Strings!" exclaimed Marty.

Marty had taken up Arnold's suggestion about the violin. A glance toward his mother's bedroom indicated a moment's debate. No, not now. He fingered the strings nervously. "A set. I only needed the E."

"Might as well have the outfit," said Arnold cheerily.

"Good idea," nodded Daniel Simms. "The old fiddler's sort of been out of it."

Jo Ellen wondered whether Arnold now knew that she knew. She could understand, as she had not been able to understand, the meaning of the look he always gave her at the first of a meeting. It was always, too, a look that did not last. If it was a guiltiness in sharing a concealment, it gave place to a franker look—a wishing look, you might say. There was something radiantly honest about him. Wherever his thought might wander, she was sure it came back to a good wish for the situation.

"How's business?" Daniel Simms asked.

"Big. We can't fill half the orders."

"How's your business?" Arnold asked Jo Ellen earnestly.

"Her people fill seats," laughed Simms.

"They seem to think they're filling

very well." Jo Ellen added with an effort toward lightness.

No subject had a long life. Perhaps Arnold felt the special impediment. Perhaps he always felt an impediment at the beginning and was longer than usual tonight in getting it out of the way, because it was

accompanied by a new weight. It became painful to be conscious of his struggle. It would be a relief to have him go. Yet Jo Ellen had a dull dread of the time when he should go, and when Daniel Simms should be off to his club. Dreading strengthened her resolve to refuse a scene.

When the time came, when Arnold had chosen to go away with Simms, and Marty had withheld the signal that might have been a restraint, Jo Ellen realized that the dread had gone with him. Left alone with Marty, and freed, for the time, of his mother, it was suddenly clear that

her suffering had carried her past the merely awkward place. The big calamity remained, but she was sure she could handle scenes. Coming back was accepting the big calamity. You had to take what went with it. Marty had worked it out like something maudlin in a book. He wanted

to cast himself at her feet or cry on her shoulder. He had dramatized a spectacular contrition, and the confusion of the erring being completed, pity and an eternal bond were to be the rest.

She did pity him. It was immensely sad to see him watch the closing

of the door, then turn to the measuring of his chances with her. There was nothing left of him to inspire anything but pity. It might have been that he could make a sin look small by the presence of a chastened strength.

(To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBS

VILLA NEBB

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess



Barney Google and Spark Plug

SUNSHINE KNOWS WHAT HOMESICKNESS IS

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck



BRINGING UP FATHER

JERRY ON THE JOB

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus



JERRY ON THE JOB

TAKE YOUR CHOICE.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban



Wonder What the Prince of Wales Thinks About?

ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield



New York

By O. O. McINTYRE.

New York, Aug. 29.—Thoughts while strolling around New York: There's treason. An old book beer sign. What's the meaning of Gaper anto? A Hungarian neighborhood. Gypsy faces. Donkey carts and strolling violinists. Music with a zoom, zoom, zoom.

Early morning around Grand Central. Deserted. Like tag day in Scotland. Arthur Brisbane hurrying somewhere. More pedicled cabs. If they keep this up jazz bands will be playing for pennies in back yards. Sakes alive! A white derby with a purple band.

Windows getting dressed for the day. Ah, a copy of my book. It will probably remain there for some time. "Flies should stay single. Late sleepers arising from Bryant Park. Shake themselves like wet dogs and start their daily "mooching."

A street cleaner with Horace Greeley whiskers. A sign on an employment agency door: "Wanted—Grave-diggers." Five-cent stores. Hash houses. And cellar dance halls. Cool air at Morning in a bakery. Frosted lemon pie. Slabs of gingerbread. Cinnamon rolls and glittering cakes. Aristocratic looking stenographers. Somewhere a band is playing a funeral dirge. An idol of the Forties—Father Leslie. Comforts forlorn people of the stage. An Italian wedding. The bride in white satin. And carriages all ablaze with flowers and ribbons. The groom trussed in unaccustomed outwayer.

I've waited so long in this store I've forgot what I came after. Clerks ad libbing about a movie. Pale strap-hangers ready for the daily grind. George Luks, the artist. Shop girls with tricky warty accessories. Canes. Drop earrings. And so on.

Traffic policemen march to their posts. The potted palms are looking well at the Ritz. A department store offers free movies. A carriage starter in front of a soda fountain.

A little chorus girl "seared by the Broadway flame," left for her home town in Wisconsin the other day. "I'm never coming back," she said. "I've been here two years and was beaten up by a man and leached was married. Three times I was named as a correspondent, and the only fellow I thought was a nice person turned out to be a pick-pocket."

Up in Harlem is a cubbyhole of a shop with the legend: "Medical Preparations for Confused Pain and Misery." This is painted in gold caps on the window. The proprietor is a negro known as Mr. D. Alexander. He specializes in "Black Cat's Ankle Dust," which sells for \$50 a bottle and which he says will make you happy, lucky and well. He also sells "Bringing Back the Boys Powder" to women. His "Fit Breaker" dust is \$10 a bottle. Other of his remedies include "Guffer Dust, Moon No. 1" and "King Solomon's Marrow."

Mister Alexander does a big business among the superstitious and rich in his own automobile. Inside his shop a banner which reads: "Spells of all kinds released and broken. Love Apples in all forms. Magic Roots and Herbs that keep off haunts and make you as courageous as a Hon."

New York boys have small outlets for their roving spirit. Five little ragged urchins from the East Side began to climb the facade of the Century theater—tiptoeing along cornices and finally reaching an impasse. They shouted for help and held on until a fire net was brought and into this they jumped and went merrily on their way. Several women who watched them swooned.

And following the writing of that I nearly swooned. A messenger arrives with a modest request from a man I have met twice asking for a loan of \$500. "I need it badly," he says. "And know you will not refuse." I wonder exactly how he knows?

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