

JO ELLEN

By ALEXANDER BLACK. Copyright, 1924.

(Continued From Yesterday.)
Mrs. Simms, whose headache, if it survived the pellets, had not impaired her appetite, went about the after-dinner work in a bustling muteness. Under observation she always worked as if driven. Jo Ellen, with the drying-towel, followed the appointed system, which involved knowing the place for every dish and utensil. To commit no error was to avoid the chance of a rebuke that would make her feel like a servant who had come in late.

The need to commit no error pervaded the dinner functions. It stretched forward into the empty evening. It pressed upon Jo Ellen as a yoke of a heavy yoke, and she wished to go to go anywhere. But this was absurd for one who had just come in. The quiet of an evening should have been a solace to one who had experienced the scramble of a working day. This quiet was wrong, full of eyes and ears. The crackling of Simms' newspaper was thunderous. . . . Simms was sure of things he said outside of the rooms, in his office on a lower floor, in the foyer, once when he walked with her to the station, all gathered to an understanding that was the nature of a support because he was content simply to let her feel his affection. While he was there the others were especially guarded.

When he went away Jo Ellen found a different quality in Mrs. Simms' silence. It seemed to erect menacing tentacles. Jo Ellen could hear her breathe and give forth a snoring, a customary sigh. Marty twisted in his chair as if to detach himself from a thrall. The inanity of a question would indicate that he could no longer resist an impulse to be released. Any question served the purpose. Jo Ellen would be tempted to deny to herself that she was sulking or accepting any complicity in the excruciating stupidity of the office. She would start telling Marty about something that had happened, something not involving debatable contacts. Despite his apparent eagerness for diversion, his attention was imperfect. His eyes appeared to glaze. He had no real interest in the things she brought up. He could kindle at something shocking in the news, but when his father happened to be present he betrayed signs of remembering his mother.

On this night she thought that perhaps it was a fancy. She often challenged her own imaginings. She frequently discovered that when she had completed a miserable picture of her thoughts he was thinking about nothing at all. Suddenly he came out with—

"Have you ever seen anything more of—"
And he stopped short. His mother looked up. Jo Ellen knew the name he had almost blundered into using.

"Well," said his mother. "What's the idea?"
Marty's face contorted. "You know who I mean—the actor fellow."
The lie seemed to be nailed by Mrs. Simms.

"What do you think you're asking? The actor fellow. I think you're losing your mind. What other kind do you think she meets?"
"That ain't so," protested Marty. "She sees all kinds of people. Millions of them. You know the one I mean—"

He was bent on getting past the lie. "That guy—"
Jo Ellen made a writhing attempt to help him. "You mean Canner-ton?"
"That's the one!"
"I haven't seen him lately."

This was another lie, if the name were to be translated. Mrs. Simms was alert for the effect. But there was no very good handles for a criticism.

Jo Ellen slid into an abyss of hypocritical misery. It was calamitous that he should have happened to think of Stan.

"I don't see how these mountebanks live," remarked Mrs. Simms. "You mean the scandalous lot."
"Well," Marty added vaguely, "they got to live."
"Have they? I don't see it. Anyway, we don't have to talk about them—or mix with them."

"Jo Ellen has to, if it's her business. A dirty business."
Marty jerked about in his chair. He took on the look of struggling under a seizure. The red tury in his face reached a crisis that was expressed at least in four words that were hysterically accented.

"Always picking on her!"
Mrs. Simms dropped her hands and stared. "There was now glint in her fixed, pinioning glance, an incredulous and astonishing anger."
"That'll do for you," she said.

"That'll do for you," she said. "You're all acting impudently at each other. You. What have you to say? An unspoken resentment seemed to blaze up in her face. 'What good are you? Sittin' here telling me—'"

Jo Ellen's hand made an involuntary gesture of protest.
Mrs. Simms did not miss the sign. "And I'll have nothing from you either, Miss Smarty. Not a word."

"I haven't said a word," Jo Ellen hung out.
"Keep it up. I don't want any words. We had no trouble in this house until you bur—"
"She's my wife!" screamed Marty. "You're all acting impudently at each other, and Marty stammering for more words, gave her a sickening apprehension of the deeper trouble."

She was separating mother and son. At the window, her face close to the glass, she peered into the cool darkness and shivered. There was the black beauty of the stars, and across the shimmering neighboring towers she could see the lamp of Liberty.

XIIP
The note from Stan Lamar was not on her desk when she reached the office in the morning. It came into Aaron's hands in one of the intervals before noon, and thus found its way. Would she, when she came back from luncheon, stop in at room 506 on the fifth floor. This was the sum of it, with an "S. L." to finish. After lunch. There must be a special meaning in this. But special meanings were negligible at the moment.

So was the firm name on office 506. Enough that it was 506, and something not like anything else was to happen.

At the click of the door he came out of the inner office. They were alone. She listened indifferently to the explanation. His friend Massinger and the partner had gone into the west. The place would be closed until the end of the month. He had the key. She regarded with more interest his knowing why Eberly would be away until after four. Their meeting was subject to no observation such as must be possible in a restaurant, for example. The need to be unobserved was made plain later on. Everything was made plain later on. . . . not by any blunt recital of detail. The bearings of this and that came as part of a slanting revelation that had a kind of phantasmal wonder, implying a huge, daring readjustment of the world.

There was a leather-covered sofa upon which they sat presently. On the wall opposite was a wide picture of a terrace, with white-draped fig-

ures and a profusion of flowers. Perhaps the round thing at the back was a turret of a castle. No particular meaning attached itself to the picture. It was simply the object that hung where it became a part of any thinking that happened on the other side of the room. At one moment it was strangely clear. At others, it swam grotesquely, or receded into an opalescent haze through which red lightning flickered.

He was holding her hand while he spoke about his approaching journey. The touch appeared to loosen the tightness of everything. A tingle in her face was reminiscent of the liquor at Amy Lennings' . . . and of the dance. These sensations seemed to envelop her. Although his shoulder was against her, he was not so near, so real as something within her that quivered like a thread of flame, an exquisitely confusing fiery whisper.

She knew what he was going to say. She did not know how he was going to say it, nor how she would feel when she had actually heard it. She was letting the words come. She wanted to know how she would feel when she heard the ultimate call, she seemed to be fearfully obscure, a kind of quaking tangle, not to be understood; full of desperate wishes that quarreled with one another. As for feeling deprived, that belonged with what she was doing. She recalled moments on the roof when she had felt that only some crime could make her feel comfortable. . . . (To Be Continued Tomorrow.)

THE NEBBS



OH, PROMISE ME.



Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess

Barney Google and Spark Plug

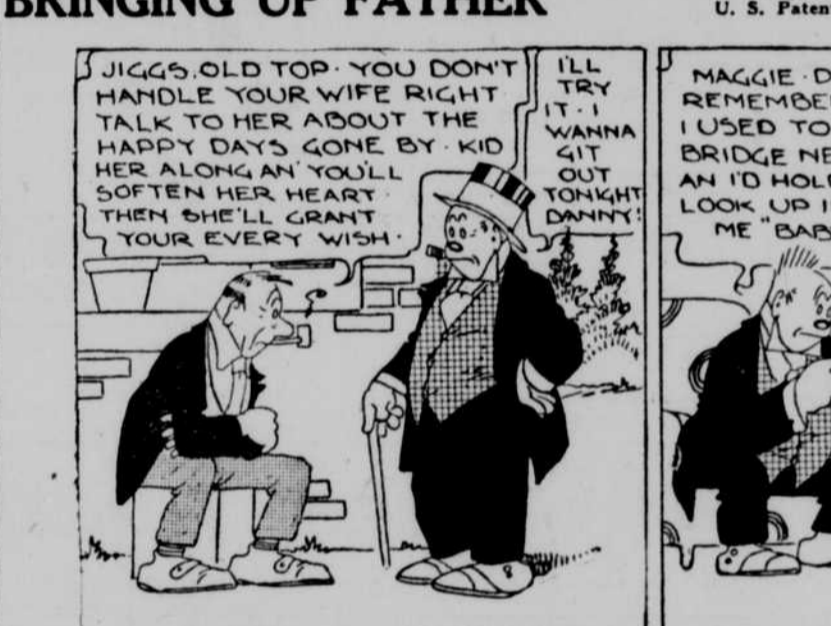


BARNEY EVIDENTLY OBJECTS.



Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck

BRINGING UP FATHER



Registered U. S. Patent Office

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus

JERRY ON THE JOB



LET JOY BE UNCONFINED



Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban

New York

--Day by Day--

By O. O. MCINTYRE.

On the Atlantic, Sept. 5.—Last night they gave the ship concert—the proceeds of which go to the aid of disabled seamen. The master of ceremonies was a British Lord Helpus or something. A jolly old fellow, the fruit of the Lawrence, was the main attraction. An American actress ducked out on the program. She seemed slightly squiffed at dinner and the entertainment fell upon the broad shoulders of a French movie star who did an Apache dance to the tune of "My Man."

The usual gouges took place last night. At dinner the collection for the cafe orchestra was taken up. An English dancer and a young girl from Texas took one-half of the dining room each. It was sophisticated against naivete. And naivete won for the Texas girl's receipts were \$30 higher. And this pleased Bill Hogg, who had bet on her.

Later he was displeased when instead of lifting his voice in rendition of "The Star Spangled Banner" he whistled. This, I have learned is patriotically de trop. Live and learn. There was a noticeable stiffness among the British at American humor and vice versa at the concert. Each seemed to miss the point of the other's wheezes. I would like to see the British reaction to Bob Benney's lecture, "With Gun and Camera Through the Allmentary Canal."

Tonight is the final night aboard ship. We embark at Cherbourg on tender for the train to Paris. Those who remain aboard will go on to Southampton and London—a journey several hours away. Trunks are being packed and farewells said.

It is rare that an ocean voyage does not bring about some rare and lasting friendships. And marriage engagements are not infrequent. Few can walk the decks without catching something of the romantic cadence and exotic beauty of the sea.

Last night I talked to two old seamen who were clinging to a darkened recess near the bow. Like all their kind they are shy. Men who prefer the calm sea and open sky usually are. Their life is pitched in a blue wilderness of waste places. The melancholy swish of the sea is with them always. To me there is something sad in their calm dignity. They appear more free of malice than any other body of men.

Perhaps the most interesting spot on the ship is barred to visitors. This is the wireless room.

The most amusing passenger is one who has been dubbed the Lady of the Lognette as she uses it keeps every- and her promenades are regal. The Lognette, as she uses it keeps every- body at a distance. If she would toss it in the ocean and don a pair of specs she would, I am sure, have a much better time.

This afternoon we passed the majestic bound for New York. It was a mere dot on the horizon unless one used binoculars, but the sight of her gave a tinge of homesickness. After all, in a few hours, we Americans become foreigners—and that is never a pleasant thought.

Many prisoners have left prison longing for their cell. After being scooped up in a stateroom for almost a week one begins to understand. It becomes a home of sorts, and you leave it just a bit regretfully. It will take a day or so to adjust myself to the larger freedom of a hotel room in Paris.

Money is being changed into francs and centimes and pounds and shillings. Tomorrow night we dine in Paris. Houph la! goes another couple of francs.

(Copyright, 1924.)

The Sour Note



ABIE THE AGENT

By Briggs

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield



That's Something Else Again.