

# I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.

(Copyright, 1924.)

(Continued from Yesterday.)

And that gave him another jolt. In two short years had life degenerated into a grasping after enough money to give him a good time? The reactions of college students faintly in his mind; he recognized them, hated them—and then hated them for not being stronger.

III.

One morning, after vainly trying to write about Nairava for an hour, he seized a piece of paper and scrawled the following:

"When the history of this post-bellum mess is written, probably the earliest time when the finest performance will be attributed to those young people who came out of the war without money and had to find something to do, quick. Those fellows who strolled into town a year ago, fit and cheery in their uniforms, drank themselves into a stupor, woke up, took the first job they could find and are now seen sitting in club windows, pasty-faced and lined, talking about the price of coal—they're the ones to admire. Those girls who forgot to jazz, settled down into three-room apartments without a maid, swore off burnt food and now meet to exchange criticisms of maternity hospitals—they are the heroines of this age. Damn them all. But they're the happiest of us, and deserve to be."

"Those who made money in the war, or had it anyway, and could pick and choose and amuse themselves, they won't get much credit. But God! they suffered, some of them. The idle can suffer, first for being idle, second for having time to suffer in."

"But those that suffer most are the ones who used to cherish the visions of better things that we call ideals. It's a strong man who can keep an ideal now—and who lives that can make one valid to the world." Look at Wilson. The front page of every newspaper nowadays is proof that we have none, and poison to any we might retain. And the idealists are dying of starvation, or learning to live on poison, and growing fat.

"Oh, but it isn't all dead. I know that those visions will lead men again, and some of them, at last, will become facts and triumph. And no thanks to me. The hour of need and trial, and I idle and impotent—oh, God! what hope is there? What reward?"

## New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. M'INTYRE.

New York, Dec. 3.—The other day I visited Sing Sing prison to see a man who once went swimming with our gang in the old swimmin' hole. He is in the seventh year of a life term. Prison had already bleached him gray.

He seemed as devoid of red corpuscles as one of those wriggly things one finds under a mouldy board in the cellar. He was stooped-shouldered, hollow chested and his limp hand had the chill of death. His is the old story—whiskey, loose companions and murder.

He was in middle years a lonely old man—playing a desperate game against loneliness and despair. He picked with monotony at the cuff of one sleeve and asked me of those we had known when we were boys. I had been his only visitor since he went up the river.

The conversation zigzagged from the creek banks to the hills beyond. He was living over again the fleeting days of youth. Not once was there cynicism at the deadly commonplace-ness of his existence. There was only regret that he had muffed happiness.

When I left I asked if there might be something he wanted outside. He shook his head but there was a longing in his eye. So I persisted. And he said: "You may think it a strange request. But there is something I would like to have—something of which you would never dream.

"Back home, you remember, my mother, sister and I lived in a little cottage near the creek. It was the only place of which I have happy memories. It may not be there now but it is and you can't go back to take a picture of it and send it to me."

The photograph has been taken and no doubt by now has reached him. I left him with a sinister something gripping me like ice. Here was a murderer pining for only one thing in life—an emblem of purity.

Not once in the prison or prison yard did I see a smile. Keepers, it seems to me, are touched by this drab melancholy. Souls appear to have turned to clinkers—dry and shiny. Nothing stirs listlessness into interest. Life goes on—grim days and grim nights.

There are very few places left in the White Light Zone for professional dancers. Those who cannot find engagements in vaudeville are turning to other work, or going to Paris and London where the demand is heavy. An agency reports there are only six dancing couples now working in first class places. Three years ago there were more than 200 couples.

There is a man in the 40s who is making a living removing gun stains from furniture. In his little shop window is a placard reading: "No matter how rough the party, I can repair the damage in a jiffy."

Just one more little observation about prisons—and you may all go home but don't loiter in the aisles—I believe the greatest need of men in prison today is a friendly faith in their reformation. Many of them don't go straight when released simply because nobody cares.

It was revealed in a bankrupt petition of a young high flyer that he had left unpaid a bill for \$500 to the press agent. He had employed the press agent to bring it about he was a "first nighter."

A recent book of mine was for some time listed among the six best sellers. But whatever conceit this may have engendered was knocked into a cocked hat by a review in a paper in Scotland which said: "It is the sort of book that achieves the estimable norm of being neither sublime or ridiculous. It might have been written by a cab driver or a green grocer's clerk."

IV.

The outside life went on, faster and more steadily than ever as he felt the increasing need to forget. In it he followed Mary; the visit to Dixie church marked the point where she passed him, definitely, in ability to use money and realize social values. She made the plans, answered and sent out the invitations, mapped out the budget, chose the people and decided when to go home. With it all she kept an apparently untouched reserve, both mental and physical; she never seemed tired or bored or in doubt, and she kept time for at least an hour's practice every day.

She enjoyed herself, he discovered, and she did so well and was so intelligent and sane about it all that he could not grudge her her enjoyment. He thought she probably had an ideal of wealth, and was enabled to realize it better now for her youth of enomy and discipline. The ideal comprised gaiety, freedom, a certain crispness of mind and urbanity; above all urbanity. It wasn't a wholly bad notion; come, good friends, let us enjoy the best there is in the world and each other, and forget the rest. But there was something more to it, he thought. Why Schumann every morning, especially preceded by finger exercises? He could not see what they contributed to social uses; she almost never played to people in New York and her talent seemed out of key in their life. When he asked her she merely said that she loved music, now that art could never be the one all-important thing in anybody's life, except for a very few, and they were geniuses, or at least remarkable women. She was likely to be very unhappy, some time, when she discovered the sort of man she had married. Meanwhile it was just as well that she shouldn't think about it.

V.

Kit thought of the number of people they went round with in whose lives art played no part whatever, primary or secondary, and decided that he had married a rather remarkable woman. She was likely to be very unhappy, some time, when she discovered the sort of man she had married. Meanwhile it was just as well that she shouldn't think about it.

He would wake up somewhere between nine and twelve in the morning and almost always find himself alone in the room. Frequently he could hear Mary's laborious Czerny, or phrases out of Brahms or Chopin, filtering up from the drawing room. She was generally out before he came down, and he would not see her till late in the day; in that case he would usually find a note on the breakfast table.

"I lunch out today, and so do you. Nothing this afternoon you have to bother about."

"Dinner here, 7:30. Dyers, Marie Chavaux and some others. Get some bridge cards, there's a dear. All ours are filthy."

"Hoffingtons' music. Drummonds' dance. Tezka. I told Elizabeth and George Carey we'd meet them at the Rendezvous around two. Got a clean shirt?—M."

He would ascend to his old bedroom, which he now used as a study; light a pipe and sit down before his typewriter. In fifteen minutes he would be at the telephone, arranging for a squash game in the afternoon or making an appointment with a lawyer or a tailor or answering a call for Mary. One piece of telephonic business suggested another, and he soon came to the conclusion that it was so near lunch time that he wouldn't bother about his book.

Lunch was at one of the clubs, almost always with somebody. And there was generally some one to talk with afterwards till at least three. Then he would wander into the library and pick up a book or a magazine; no hurry, nothing this afternoon but squash. And Mary's bridge cards. And call up Cooper to see about his shirts.

By the time he came to it, it was too late for anything but his squash appointment. When it wasn't squash he had to have his hair cut, or look in on some damnable boring tea party he hadn't had the sense to get out of. If he waited in the club till five o'clock he was always sure to get caught in a bridge game, and would rush out of the building with his coat tails flying, at 7:25.

Dinner was a time of relaxation; Mary on deck near everything perfect. Bridge, mixed bridge for small stakes, soporific stuff. At eleven or so they would make a general exodus to some private party.

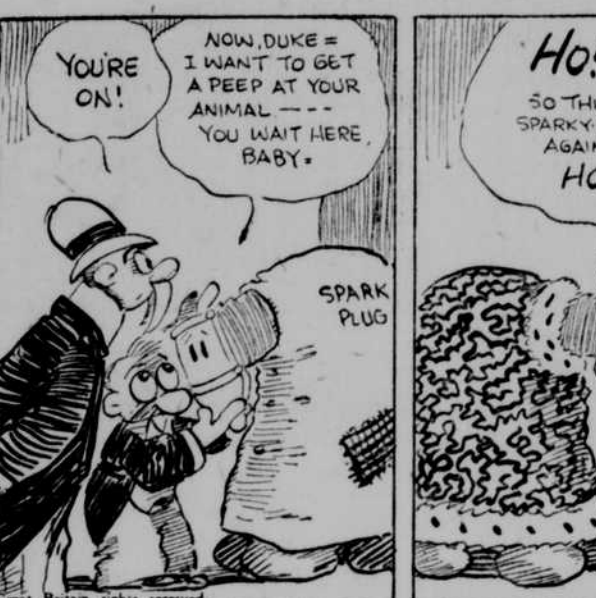
Whirling about with jiggling light flappers, silent, distrustful, awkward, apparently not enjoying themselves, he did not enjoy them particularly, either, but always danced with them, for no reason that he could make out, except that he was only twenty-five.

Often in the ballroom and invariably in the coat room some of the younger men could be observed under the influence. Spasm of revulsion; wasn't good form in my day. Oh, well, your day is past, my boy. Youth

## THE NEBBBS



## Barney Google and Spark Plug



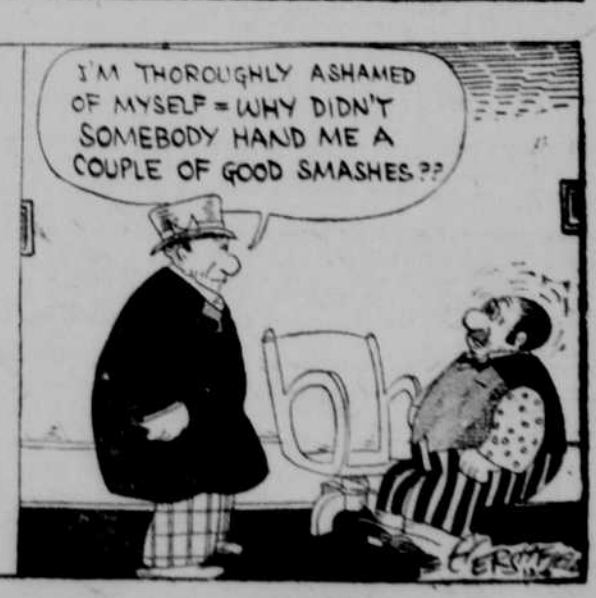
## BRINGING UP FATHER



## JERRY ON THE JOB



## That Guiltiest Feeling



## THE NIGHT OF THE NIGHT.

Directed for The Omaha Bee by Sol Hess (Copyright 1924)



## Barney Google and Spark Plug

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Billy DeBeck (Copyright 1924)



## BRINGING UP FATHER

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by McManus (Copyright 1924)



## JERRY ON THE JOB

## WASTE NOT, WANT NOT.

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hoban (Copyright 1924)



## That Guiltiest Feeling

## ABIE THE AGENT

Drawn for The Omaha Bee by Hershfield (Copyright 1924)

