

Broadway Jones

FROM THE PLAY OF GEORGE M. COHAN BY EDWARD MARSHALL

(Copyright, 1913, by C. W. Dillingham Co.)

of the massed red-brick and board buildings forming, in Jonesville, Conn., the extensive group devoted to the manufacture of Jones' Gum, was the abandoned powerhouse, wherein were housed the water-wheels which once had furnished force to drive the factory's machinery. The stream's diminishing flow and the increased needs of the business, and the economy of stream all militated toward industrial abandonment of the old building.

Small boys never fished there, for the water was too swift, loafers never idled there, for the watchmen of the mills were too strict in their guardianship; but lovers sometimes wandered there, of moonlight nights; and in the afternoons, when the academy sessions had ended, Broadway, really named Jackson, but nicknamed "Broadway" because of his continual glorification of New York's great thoroughfare, which had been seen upon occasion, sometimes at there "to get away from Jonesville." This afternoon he was to teach the Jonesville girl friends new dances which he had learned in New York City. Later, dancing these with the Odd Fellows' hall, they had confound all other girls in Jonesville.

The girls came promptly. Clara Spotswood was the daughter of the judge, Josie Richards the daughter of a recent manager of the gum factory. Her father was now laid up with rheumatism, and Josie was in waiting for a bookkeeper's post in the great enterprise which swallowed up the youth of Jonesville as soon as they left school.

"Now, this step, girls," Broadway said in preface, "was invented on Broadway for use upon Broadway by Broadway people. Don't mistake it for a sleep-dance. It's not a sleep-dance—it was not dreamed out in Jonesville."

"And was everybody dancing it?" asked Josie.

"Every girl I saw," he answered. "I had been telling of a ball he had danced in New York, but not quite the might have told about it. 'Excuse me I saw, but one.'"

"And was she dancing old style?"

"No; she was being carried to an ambulance. She had just sprained an ankle."

"Oh, Jackson; you're too funny!" "Thanks for those kind words." He asked them whirl together for a moment. "No; not quite that way. Don't give a Broadway step a Jonesville twist; you want to give a Jonesville step a Broadway polish." Breathless they stopped their efforts. "Oh, you and your Broadway! You're always talking about Broadway."

"Clara," said Jackson very seriously, "have you ever seen Broadway?" "You know I haven't."

"Well, if you had, you'd never see another place you thought worth seeing."

"Oh, you and your Broadway!" Josie Richards was an extremely pretty girl, more serious than Clara, who was fluffy. "No wonder the boys all call you 'Broadway!'"

"I suppose a minister is proud when people call him 'doctor,'" was the answer. "When people call me 'Broadway,' I feel about like that."

"I'd rather folks would call me Andrew—Jackson," remarked Sammy. "Andrew—Jackson—was a statesman—not—a—street."

"Your—er—little brother," began Broadway, but, not being eloquent by nature, he left the sentence incomplete.

"He thinks he'll be a Caesar." He wants to kill some boys by strategy, for he's too fat to fight."

The girls laughed again. Now they had begun the pleasant homeward walk along the high road to the border of the village.

"Can you come to supper?" Clara asked.

"As long as I can't eat on Broadway I'd rather go to your house than to any other place I know," said Jackson. "But I've got to go home first. This collar's wilted."

He was the only boy in Jonesville who would have thought of that; he was the only boy in Jonesville who owned a pair of patent-leather shoes.

As they passed his uncle's residence the old man, who was his guardian, caught a glimpse of him through an opening in the neglected shrubbery on the great lawn, and sent a serving man to bid him enter.

Jackson made a wry face for the benefit of the girls, as he said goodbye to them, promising to appear for supper at the Spotswoods'. He carefully obeyed the summons, but it irked him. His uncle always irked him. He believed, and there were others who believed, that his uncle tried to irk him. They never had got on very well together; the old man was hard, conservative to the point of stubbornness and opposed every young idea, particularly every young idea which chanced to have originated in his nephew's brain.

"Well, Jackson," said his uncle sourly.

"Well, Uncle Abner."

"Really to settle down in Jonesville, are you?"

"Now, uncle," said the youth protestingly.

"Your father settled down here. I settled down here," said the grim, unlovable old man. "You have obligations here. The Jones Gum factory has built this town, and is responsible for it. You will have charge of the factory before long."

Jackson writhed. He didn't wish to have charge of the factory.

"It's not good business, uncle," he had once told the man who now sat

staring at him moodily. "They'll think it was the gum that made him bald. Poor grandfather was too bareheaded to be a good advertisement for anything, except—an Indian."

"Why an Indian?" his uncle inquired without suspicion.

"As an after-taking 'ad' of the best scalper in the tribe."

This irreverence had abruptly ended that day's interview.

But this evening Abner Jones was busy with more serious thoughts.

"When are you going to work?" he crabbedly demanded.

"I don't see—"

"Jackson, every Jones for two generations has learned the gum business before he was as old as you; but you, foolishly indulged by your father—I have never seen such madness as the way he brought you up—have come to manhood knowing nothing of it. Don't you ever wish to settle down?"

"Not yet," said Jackson boldly. "I'm too young."

"You're twenty-one."

"I'm twenty-one; but I've lived most of the time in Jonesville. That makes me just fifteen so far as actual age goes—and yet the time seems longer than it is," said the irreverent Jackson.

"I'm almost discouraged. I'm free to tell you, Jackson, that, if your father's will had left me any opportunity for doing so, I should see to it that, when I pass to my reward, you would have no share of the great business which you hold in such contempt."

"Pass on to your—er—yes," Jackson murmured.

"I have had tales brought to me of some things you have said about Jonesville," said the old man bitterly. "You have compared it most unfavorably with that modern Babylon, New York."

"Well—er—uncle, you know New York is—well, more metropolitan."

"Jonesville is metropolitan enough. Jonesville is a pleasant little town, built by the industry and brains of the members of your family, sir—in both of which you seem to be most singularly lacking; and, while it has fewer people than New York, it has more virtues. You will be the only Jones remaining after I have gone. I am far from well. I—"

Instantly the young man was contrite. He had no wish to hurt his uncle's feelings.

"I'm sorry, sir, if you are feeling ill," he said, respectfully; "but, you see, you've always lived in Jonesville—a great drain on a man's vitality. I didn't mean to say a word to bother you."

But the old man was not to be pacified; his face continued stern. "It is less your words than what seems to be your disposition which annoys me," he burst forth. "Is there nothing serious in you?"

"I guess I'm pretty young to settle down. Perhaps that's what's the matter."

"I had settled down and had complete charge of the bookkeeping department of this great enterprise before I was eighteen. You might begin to take life seriously."

"You can't take it any other way in Jonesville."

"I feel that I should tell you various details of the business, for my days here may be numbered."

The youth looked deprecatingly around the dull old library, feeling, in the earnestness of his revolt, that if his own days in Jonesville were but numbered it would give him great relief. Even death, he thought—

"I'm sorry you're not well, sir."

"We are but shadows cast upon the stream of life. Mere shadows, Jackson."

Jackson gazed at him with careful eyes; that his mouth was also careful was entirely proven by the fact that it said nothing. A careless mouth might have remarked that his old uncle was a pretty solid shadow, for he weighed close upon two hundred pounds.

"Your father," said this very robust invalid, "had some tendencies which I now see in you—exaggerated in you, Jackson. He, too, was frivolous; he, too, longed for the flesh-pots of New York."

"I never did, sir," he said, gravely. "I wish I might feel sure of that," said Abner Jones. "I should feel surer of the safety of the gum."

"I shall never harm the gum, sir."

"You must not only never harm it; you must help it. Let me tell you, Jackson—there is a trust in the gum business—"

"Yes, sir, I've heard of it."

It would have been remarkable if he had not. For two years the air of Jonesville had been full of timid rumors of the gum trust. The whole town was fearful that the great Jones factory might be sold to it and closed.

"After I am gone they will endeavor to secure our factory and business," Abner Jones went on. "I shall never let them have it. You must never let them have it. Of your pride in the Jones gum—"

"It's surely been a handsome little money maker," Broadway granted.

"I do not like your language," said his uncle, "but the meaning of your words is accurate enough. It has made money. It still continues to make money—as an independent gum. It—"

Broadway was getting sidgety. The Spotswoods were waiting supper for him. Mrs. Spotswood was a plump and cheerful housewife, who doted on the recipes he brought back from New York upon the rare occasions when his uncle let him go there.

"It would make more, uncle,

(Continued on Page 43)