SUNNY DUCROW

By HENRY ST. JOHN COOPER

THIS STARTS THE STORY

Elizabeth Ann Ducrow, known as "Sunny," works in a pickle factory. She tells Bert Jackson, who works at the pickles with her, that she intends to do something better and ride in a motorcar some day. Sunny lives with her aunt, who is grumbly and impressed with Sunny and Bert are hungry for a day in the country, but looking the funds they sing on the street for pennies, are arrested for "vagrancy" and pardoned by the magistrate. Leslie Montressor, well-known actress, impressed with Sunny's originality, brings her before Max Hemmingway, theatre manager. He sees possibilities in her and gives her a small part in a play. Bert also is given a part. Their experience at the rehearsals and their first appearance is unique. Sunny makes a speech which wins for her tremendous applause, and Bert is paralyzed with stagefright, which by the audience is taken for the natural acting, and he also wins applause. Both Sunny and Bert are told they are to repeat the same stunt each night. A bouquet is handed to Sunny and in the center is found a box containing a diamond pendant, and there was a card attached. Sunny tells the audience next night about the flowers and the pack-age. There is a ring of truth in her words which reach the heart of the audience, and again she is applauded. Next morning she receives a call from Mr. Gibbins. He was very poor looking and hungry looking, too. Sunny orders breakfast. "But you've had a breakfast once!" Mrs. Melkin and Mrs. Melkin was learning obedience. In the old days, when Sunny had earned seven shillings a week, it was she who was mistress of the establishment. Now Sunny was morning seven or eight times that amount, with the promise of more in the immediate future. She rang the bell. The surprised landlady brought up the breakfast things, which she had only just taken down. More bacon was cooked, and Mr. Gibbins had his breakfast, firmly believing that Sunny was having hers. Mr. Gibbins is coming every morning, she explains to her aunt. He is going to improve me. People began to know the name Sunny Ducrow. She was much photographed. She returned the diamond pendant to Lord Dobrington. He meets her on the street one day, and—"Miss Ducrow!" he said. "That's me!" she said. "And you are the Viscount——" "My name is Dobrington," he said — "Lord Dobrington. Miss Ducrow, I've wanted to apologize to you for a long time past. I feel——" he paused abruptly. "The flowers were lovely," she said. "Kept 'em eight days before I had to throw 'em away." "I'm glad. But the other——" "We needn't talk about that," Sunny said. "You got it back all right?" He nodded.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

"I am sorry, and—and a little ashamed. I thought you would like it and—"

"I did like it," Sunny said. "It was lovely; but, of course"—she looked up at him with her frank eyes—"I didn't know you and you didn't know me, and I couldn't take it, could I?"

"No," he said, "I suppose not."

"Well, there's nothing else to say about it, is there?" she said.

"I'd like to say a good deal more about it," he said.

He looked down at her. He had thought her pretty on the stage. Here, in the open air, in the strong sunlight, she seemed a thousand times prettier to him, and it was not mere prettiness alone. Her little face was sparkling with animation. She seemed actually to dance along the pavement by his side. She was a fairy, a sprite, and yet she was very, very womanly.

There was something in the eyes of her that spoke of unfathomable tenderness, of a great power for sympathy; a girl with such eyes might encourage and hearten a man to do anything, to face any odds; might pick a man out of the gutter and set him on his feet, give him a new lease of life, give him back self-respect and the courage he might have lost. He saw all that in Sunny's smiling, happy eyes.

"You've forgiven me?" he said.

"I had nothing to forgive," she said.

"Then you will shake hands?" He paused and held out his hand. Solemnly Sunny put her hand into his. Passers-by stopped to look at these two shaking hands solemnly in the middle of the busy pavement.

Bert hunched his shoulders. He supposed they knew what they were talking about; he did not.

"Bert, I haven't introduced you," Sunny said. "This is Bert, this is——" She paused.

"Dobrington," he said. He held out his hand to Bert.

"Hope you are well?" Bert said.

"Quite, thanks. I've enjoyed your performances, Mr. Jackson. I've laughed—I've cried; you've done me good!"

"Blimey!" Bert said. "I'd like to myself good. Laugh—" He paused, stared about him. "I've died a 'undred deaths," he said tragically. "You don't know. No one knows. Give me the skies every time." He hunched his shoulders.

"It's a quarter to one—lunch time, Miss Ducrow, very nearly."

"I was thinking the same," Sunny said.

Dobrington's eager face brightened. "Where shall it be?" he asked. "Romano's, the St. James, or ——"

"Me! I always go to the Areyated," Sunny said.

"I don't think I know——"

"The bread and tea shop—that's where I go."

"Oh, but today, won't you—I mean——"

"The Areyated's good enough for me," Sunny said. "I'm for the Areyated!" She smiled at him.

"I am, too," he said. He had never lunched at an aerated bread shop before, but he was not too old to begin. They found one of the many branches of shops and went in. Sunny ordered her repast.

"Tea and scone and butter."

Bert ordered, "Coffee and toast."

Lord Dobrington hesitated.

"You could have a egg if you wanted," Sunny whispered. "If you feel like going to it, eggs is tuppence, but they're all right."

"I'll have the same as you," he said. Lord Dobrington did not know when he had enjoyed a lunch so. He thought the coffee was excellent—or was it tea? He forgot. The scone and butter were nothing to remember. He thought of champagne and the many courses of the usual restaurants, and he did not regret them. When lunch was over, Sunny captured her own bill.

"Won't you let me?" he asked.

"What! Pay for me?" she said. "Why should you?"

"Bur——"

"I always pay for myself," Sunny said, and that ended it.

"Who was the old lady that I saw you with, I mean—coming out of the photographer's with?" Sunny asked.

"That was the Countess of Blessington," he said, "my mother."

"Your mother? She's nice-looking—and a bit, I thought, but very handsome. Thinks a lot of you, I'll bet!"

He laughed and colored in his boyish way.

"She thinks more of me than I deserve," he said.

"You didn't ought to say that," Sunny said. "I'm only a girl!"—she paused—"and worked in a pickle factory along with Bert here——"

Bert nodded.

"Wish I was back there again, I do!" she said.

"Only if I was a man and had a mother of my own," Sunny went on, "I'd say to myself, 'I'm going to be just what my mother wants me to be. I'm going to show her I'm fit to be her son.' That's the way I look at it."

"And the right way," Dobrington said. "If I was a man, I'd try and win every woman's respect," Sunny said. "But the woman whose respect I'd want most 'ud be my mother's. Me! I ain't got a mother." Her voice trembled a little. "I wish I 'ad," she said. "I'd come to work for 'er and make 'er 'appy. I'd like to have a mother to watch me grow on and feel proud of me. It's different with aunts. Aunts ain't mothers." She sighed.

But now it was time to go. They must hurry, for there was a matinee at half past two.

"You'll have to take a cab," Dobrington said.

"Not me; I'll run for it. A run'll do me good; won't it, Bert?"

"But do allow me," he said. "I'd——"

Sunny held out her hand to him. She smiled frankly. "I'm glad to know you," she said. She looked him straight in the eyes. "I like you," she said like."

"Thank you," he said. "You don't think, you don't know, how much I appreciate that. I shall remember it."

"That's all right," Sunny said. "So long!"

They were rather out of breath by the time they reached the theatre.

"What about that feller?" Bert asked. "What feller?"

"The vis-count."

"What about him?" Sunny asked.

"You look out, that's all," Bert said. "What are you talking about?"

"You'll be marrying him afore long if you don't look out."

"Me!" Sunny laughed. "'Ow can I marry 'im? Ain't you and me engaged to git married in twenty years or thereabouts?"

Bert wagged his head.

"A feller don't look at no girl like he looked at you more'n once 'less he means something. I know, I do. You'll find yourself a she-viscount, or whatever they call it, if you don't look out, I'll bet he's thinking about you and 'im getting married."

Sunny laughed.

"You go and eat coke!" she said.

CHAPTER XI

Still Getting On!

There were three of them in Mr. Hemmingway's private office when Sunny went in—Mr. Hemmingway himself, Mr. Rostheimer, and Signor Posetti, the musical conductor.

"Come in, Miss Ducrow," Mr. Hemmingway said.

"I'm coming," Sunny said. She came into the room and nodded to them. "Here I am! You sent for me?"

Mr. Hemmingway coughed.

"You know, of course, that we shall be taking off "Keep Off the Grass" in five weeks' time?"

"I know," she said.

"Miss Montressor, unfortunately, has an engagement that will take her to America for some time. Miss Blythedale will take the lead in the new thing."

Sunny nodded.

"She ought to do all right," she said generously. "She's pretty and got a lovely voice. I'll love to see her take the lead, I shall. I know she'll do well."

Mr. Rostheimer lifted his hands.

"Gootness!" he said. "And dis is von voman speaking of another! Vil der heavens fall, or vat is it?"

"What's the matter with you?" Sunny said.

"Now Miss Ducrow, we want you to have a more prominent part in the new revue, which is to be called "Look Out There!"

"I don't mind," Sunny said, "if you don't. Only no pickle-factory girls for me this time. See?"

"No," he said thoughtfully. "What about a coster?" Sunny flushed.

"I told you, no corsters for me! Next part I take is going to be a young-lady part. Oh," she cried, "you needn't smile! You don't think I can do it? Very well, then, listen to me. Excuse me, Mr. Hemmingway. I really could not consider taking the part of a person in a lowly walk of life. I infinitely prefer to take the character of a young lady of some intelligence and education. Do I make myself plain? I trust I do. Excuse me for putting my views before you in this manner, but I really wish you quite to understand me, that I am entirely capable of taking the part of a person of education. See?" Sunny paused.

They stared at her.

"Dot girl, she drive me silly mit laughing," said Rostheimer. "What game she up to now, eh?"

"Half a moment," Sunny said. "I haven't done yet. Permit me, Mr. Hemmingway and you gentlemen; there is something I would like to say, or, rather to do, that will prove my contention that I am perfectly qualified to take a better part than that which you propose allotting to me. Have I your permission?"

"Oh, go on, fire away!" Hemmingway said.

Sunny stood up before them; her face was grave.

"'The quality of mercy is not strain'd,'" she said. "'It droppeth, as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath.'" She went on from beginning to end. It was Portia's speech, and she was letter perfect. Not that alone, but she acted her part; her gestures were admirable, her intonation, her expression, all that could be desired. The three stared at her.

Sunny climbed down with a gesture of relief.

"Now you've got it!" she said. "You think I'm not good for nothing but corster parts or pickle-factory parts. You think, because I talk in the way I like to talk in, I'm not good at nothing excepting low parts; but you're off the line. You give me young-lady parts, nice and ladylike."

"I believe, by George, you could do it!" Mr. Hemmingway said.

"Try me," Sunny said.

"Look here! In this revue there's a girl who runs away from school. Lady Maud, she's called. She runs away from school and joins a traveling circus for love of adventure. It's a good part; heaps of fun and go in it. We thought of some one else; but——" He paused. He looked at Rostheimer.

"Oh, for goodness' sake led her haf it! I'm gedding to believe that that girl could blay anything."

"You leave it to me," Sunny said. "Am I to have the part or not?"

"There are three songs in it," Mr. Hemmingway said.

"Make it four," Sunny said.

"Three," Hemmingway said. "And that's two more than you've been doing. And two of them are fairly heavy songs; not tripe like that Piccalilli thing."

"It's a better tune than you can write any day!" Sunny said.

Signor Posetti smiled. He had written the tune.

"Oh, I don't say anything about the tune, but I say the words are tripe. These songs are good—two of them big."

"All the better," Sunny said.

"Let's see," Hemmingway paused. "How long have you been on the stage, Miss Ducrow?"

"Three months," Sunay said.

"Three months, and yet you are going to play second lead!" Hemmingway said. "You seem to be getting on, Miss Ducrow!"

"That's what I am here for," Sunny said. "In six months I'll be playing lead. You don't believe it?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" Rostheimer was laughing.

"Go on; you'll split your sides. What's the matter?" Sunny said.

"Madder! You make me laugh, that's all. You blay de lead in six months!"

"Betcher!" Sunny said.

"I bet you a hundred pounds to—to von shilling dat you dond blay lead inside six months from dis day," Rostheimer said.

Sunny nodded.

"You start saving up that hundred pounds, old dear. Six months! I shan't forget. It'll be something toward my new motorcar. Anyhow, I'm to play Lady Maud?"

"Yes," Hemmingway said.

"That's settled, then," Sunny said. "Now, what about Bert?"

"I fancy Jackson can look after himself. He's in the chorus, of course."

"I've got to look after Bert. He's like most men—he can't do anything for himself. He don—did—pretty well in the last. He's to have a song in the new thing—'Look Out There!'"

"Song! He couldn't sing," Hemmingway said.

"He's going to sing," Sunny said. "He's got to sing. I know what Bert can do and I know what he can't do."

"He's got no voice," Hemmingway said. "It's impossible."

"That's it. He's got no voice and he can't sing—not for toffee! But, all the same, he's going to have a song—something slow and sad-like," Sunny said. She turned to Posetti. "You foller me?" she asked.

"Yes, I tink so. I tink, Mr. Hemmingway—I tink Miss Ducrow is right. I see it. Leave it to me."

Sunny smiled. She and Posetti were allies—friends. The little Italian was vain and susceptible to flattery and admiration. Sunny genuinely admired his talents, and told him so.

"I don't know," Hemmingway said, "I don't know. I can't see that fellow singing."

"You'll hear him all right, though," Sunny said. "You leave it to the signor and me. And now," she said, "about money."

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

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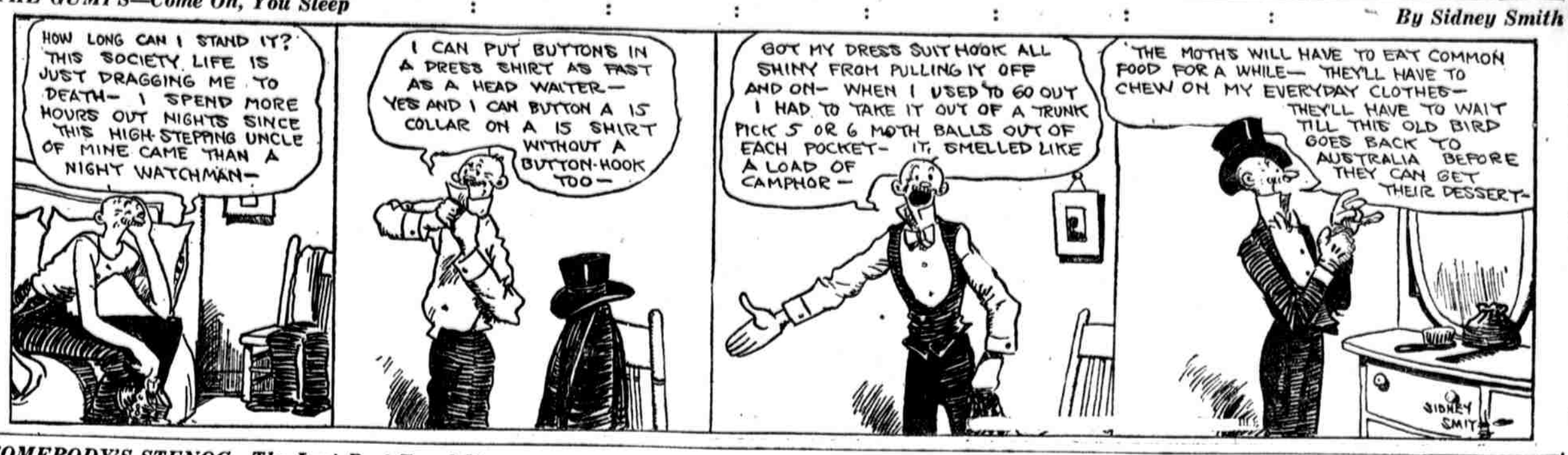
THE GUMPS—Come On, You Sleep

By Sidney Smith



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—The Last Part Eased It

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By Hayward

The Young Lady Across the Way

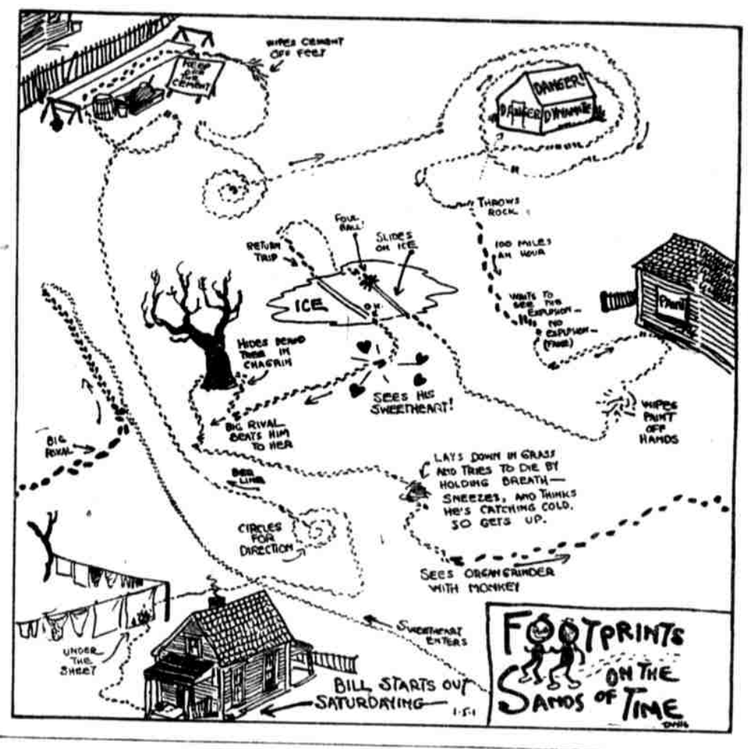
The young lady across the way says the paper always says the prisoner was thoroughly grilled before being locked up, and she's certainly glad the poor, unfortunate fellows aren't sent to their cells hungry.

THE WHOLE TOWN IS STILL TALKING ABOUT THE RECEPTION OLD MAN TALBOT GAVE HIS DAUGHTER SALLY

By FONTAINE FOX

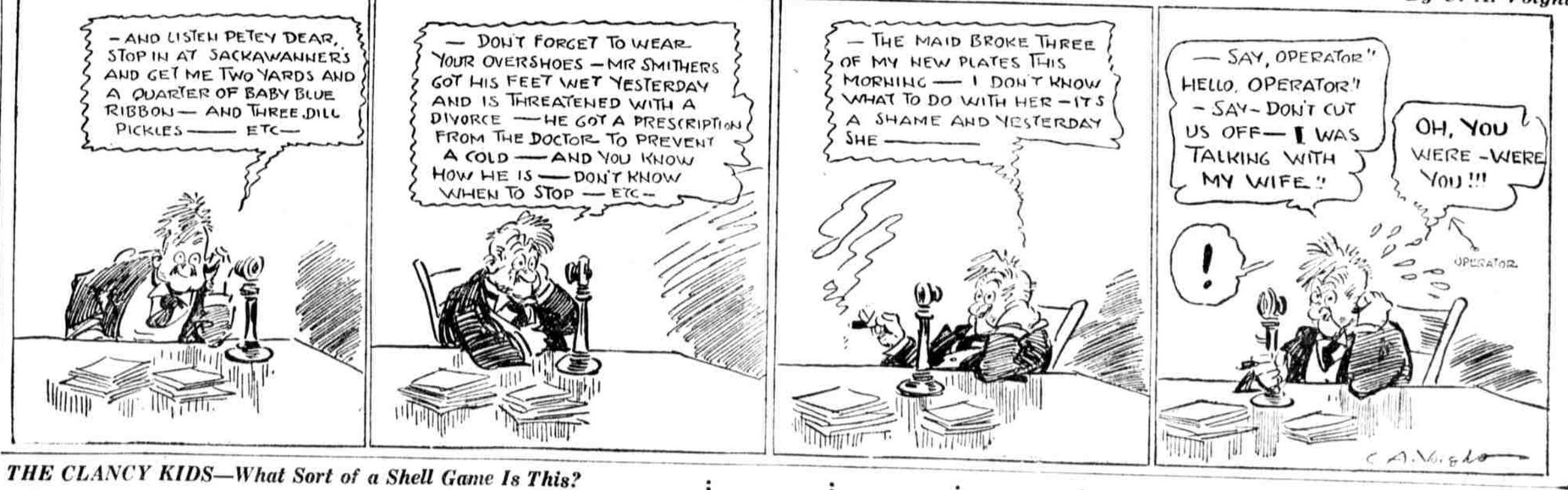
SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG



PETEY—He Flatters Himself

By C. A. Voight



THE CLANCY KIDS—What Sort of a Shell Game Is This?

By Percy L. Crosby