THE WORLD OUTSIDE

By HAROLD MacGRATH

Thrilling story of a fight for $7,000,000 and a beautiful girl's love by the author of "The Man on the Box," "Luck of the Irish," etc.

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WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

JEREMIAH COLLINGSWOOD BANCROFT, son of a mysterious recluse who died in an obscure village, leaving him $7,000,000. Jerry, an clerk, well-read, clean-cut young fellow, is anxious to see life, and goes to New York.

DANIEL STEWART, a sinister yet not unlikable man of the world, who claims to represent the "Adventure Syndicate," which offers Jerry a big adventure for $10,000, which he accepts.

NANCY BOWMAN, a successful musical comedy singer, who aspires to grand opera. Jerry has done her a favor, and the young man and girl become interested in each other, though she dislikes the attentions of theatrical men.

JENNY MALLOY, a girl of the theatre, Nancy's chum, whole-souled but blunt.

ARTHUR CRAIG, backer of Nancy's show, and in love with her.

KENNEDY, a mysterious individual, with whom the elder Bancroft had understained dealings. He has disappeared.

His Face Was Gray and Drawn

"IT'S a bargain," he said. So long as she loved no one else! "Well, I'll be going along." He stooped and picked up Ling Foo. "Has he been a good pal?"

"I don't know what I should have done without him." It did not seem possible that she had got out of it so easily.

"I'll tell you what," he said. "Enter him at the Plaza show. I'll send you his pedigree and his registered number. I didn't send them because I was never sure you were going to keep him. Put him in the novice and puppy class and he'll win. He has stout bones, a fine coat, and an exceptionally good head. It will be an outside interest; and that's what you need. Your new salary will give you more freedom; so go in for outside interests. Now"—as he dropped Ling Foo in a chair—"forget this interview and the cause of it; wipe it off the slate. It was all my fault. And just as soon as you can—move. You have thought too much in this room."

Strange inconsistency! She had suffered in this room, and she would go on suffering, in various degrees, so long as she remained; and yet she now had no wish to leave. But she nodded, so he would not pursue the subject and to get him gone.

He bade her good-by, patted her hand reassuringly, and made his departure with the air of one who had finished a most casual visit.

As the door latched Nancy leaned against it, her forehead resting upon her arm. No tears, no sobs; but occasionally a long, deep sigh stirred her shoulders.

Craig had the misfortune to meet Jenny on the sidewalk; and of all persons Jenny was the last he cared to see at this moment.

"Hello, there!" cried Jenny. Then she noticed his face, gray and drawn. "Why, what's th' matter?"

Craig realized, with much bitterness, that if he did not take Jenny part way into his confidence she might innocently produce in Nancy's mind the very effect he had taken so much painful labor to dissipate.

"Can you keep a secret, Jenny?" He knew, by the abruptness of her question, that everything was written clearly on his face.

"Sure!"

"Well, then, don't ask Miss Bowman any questions, I don't want her hurt."

"Hurt?"—bewildered.

"Yes. I lied to her; told her it didn't matter."

"In Gawd's name, what are you talkin' about?"

"She promised to marry me the other night. I have just given her back that promise. I never want her to know that it hurts. That is all."

Craig entered his car and huddled into the padded corner, closing his eyes.

Jenny stood at the curb and watched the car until it vanished, her throat stuffy, her eyes stormy. The little fool!—to let a white man like that slip through her fingers! A man who could give her everything, and love, too! What did she want, anyhow? But as Jenny went up the stairs her anger evaporated. The poor kid! Of course, if she didn't care for Craig, Nancy wasn't the kind to marry him for his money. But what had she been thinking of to jab the hook into him and then yank it out? That wasn't Nancy Bowman. What was the world coming to, anyhow? A few weeks ago they had been as happy as a couple of crickets and now everything was on the squeegee.

Jeremiah? Something Jeremiah had said when his noodle was waboling? Had something like that caused Nancy to give Craig the gate? Jeremiah and Nancy! Thunderstruck, Jenny paused at the landing. Jeremiah and Nancy! Well, why not? she demanded, belligerently of the hall shadows. Both young, both highbrow; Craig a bit too old and she, Jenny, with no more brains than a blimp.

"Gee!" she said, audibly, "but this is a tough old world, all th' same!"

Three days later Bancroft made an extraordinary discovery; or, rather, this discovery was thrust upon him in a most casual manner and drove him to wandering about the streets, his brain foggy and his heart steeped in misery. It came about in this fashion:

His head no longer bothered him save when he stooped and recovered quickly; then there was a transient stab and points of dancing fire. Otherwise—excepting the fading black eye—he was quite himself. He had actually begun work on his Latin Primer; two pages, introductory. (Which is as far as he ever got.)

The day was cold and blustery. It was four in the afternoon. Jenny was making tea. Nancy was idly thrumming the piano, while Bancroft sat on the lounge and ruffled the puppy's ears. The radiator was banging and sputtering so regularly that Nancy could not sing. Finally she had gone to the speaking tube and summoned the janitor. They were waiting for him.

Jansen came in shortly, with his usual grumble. He wore an old gray sweater, long since pulled out of shape by the weights he had carried in the side pockets.

"Why, all you gotta do is to turn that," he said, indicating the nickel tap.

"But it's too hot for bare fingers," replied Nancy.

"What kind o' fingers d' you think we've got?" Jenny wanted to know. "Plumbers'?"

Jansen grunted and dropped to his knees; and shortly the banging ceased. As he stood up something fell from one of his pockets, giving a metallic ring as it struck the floor.

"What's this?" asked Jenny, recovering the object. "A door plate."

"Say," began Jansen, taking the plate from Jenny's hand "I found that top the cellar wall this noon. Must 've been there for years. Couldn't make it out until I gave it a polish. Some hard luck story, if you want to know. It all comes back now. I've been doing janitor work twenty-odd years in this locality, and I've heard some queer stories, but this one knocks 'em cold. Want to hear it?"

"Go ahead," said Bancroft.

"Of course," said Jansen, leaning against the radiator, "I ain't got anything but outside facts, what the neighborhood said. The man who once owned this house went to South America and never came back."

South America. Bancroft stirred uneasily, conscious of a chill.

"Seems he turned over everything he had to a friend to play the market on a sure thing, borrowed money on his house and all that; and this friend cleaned him to a fare-ye-well. Stole everything and beat it. When the crash came the poor dub was thousands of miles away from home. The shock killed his wife. There was some talk about a kid, but I never got the rights o' that. But this poor come-on"—waving the door plate—"got news some way and jumped overboard. Anyhow, he never came back. He didn't mortgage the house, but borrowed on thirty-day notes; and when they fell due the bank closed in, with an auctioneer to clean out the inside stuff. But this town's full o' tales like this. Queer, that door plate on the cellar wall all these years."

"Let me see it," said Bancroft, his mouth gone oddly dry.

The door plate was of copper. In the center was graven simply—

Kennedy.

Bancroft walked the streets far into the night; and there was a gesticulative frenzy to his despair that drew the curiosity of passersby. He was indifferent to alleys and all they might hold of bodily injury. He did not care whether he lived or died. That house! The ghostly miseries that still paraded those hallways! He understood everything now; the puzzle had ceased to be and had become an open page in bold type. The blow he had been expecting from the beginning had fallen. His father had, somewhere in the past, committed an abominable act.

It was of no matter that since the association with Snell & Pride his father had been honest. Before that he had betrayed and ruined this poor devil of a Kennedy. "Paid Kennedy in full" had significance now. Satisfied vengeance had caused the underscoring of these words. Years afterward his father in an idle moment had written and underscored them in contemplation of a deed accomplished utterly. It went back to something Kennedy had done, trivial or serious; and Silas Bancroft, still pretending to be his friend, had smashed him by damnable trickery. Even if Kennedy had wronged him, such a reprisal was horrible.

These millions of his, then, were based upon the blood and bone of a poor dupe and the complete ruin of his family. Oh, he, Bancroft, would have none of that money; he would never touch another dollar of it. What he had given in legacies should stand; good out of evil; but, as for himself, not a penny. He would go to work at anything he could put his hand to—pick and shovel, if need be.

He was incapable of realizing at this moment that he could not ignore offhand these millions simply by willing it, that it would take him years to give them away without bringing himself under the interest of the lunacy commission. His thoughts were focused upon the discovery that his father had robbed, morally if not legally, a trusting man. The utter knowledge that his father had been a thoroughly honest man all his life was the one thing needed by which the son could forgive the years of coldness and neglect; and now he must hold his father's memory forever in contempt. A memorial window! He laughed aloud, brokenly, and a policeman eyed him doubtfully.

Those Forlorn Years

The blow had two edges, and presently he felt the cut of the second. He had lost all hope of Nancy, for now he had absolutely nothing to offer her. He would have to leave that house, too, where he had known his first happy hours. Oh, no; he could not remain there with the black deed of his father filling the halls and rooms with pitiful ghosts.

The highly developed imagination knows but little of the happy levels of ordinary mortals; today it is the height, tomorrow it is the abyss. Such imaginations must acquire the balancing philosophy of worldliness; and Bancroft had so little that it was negligible.

All those forlorn years, and this to cap them! As he walked on aimlessly there was suddenly projected upon his recollection the serene face of his father, touched by the setting sun; a face upon which he had never seen any emotion, any agitation, the graven calm of one who had struck out of his life all things but money—money—money.

Bancroft stopped, as if some invisible barrier had reared itself in his path. Blind fool! Why, of course that was it. The Great Adventure Company! And he was to pay his father's debts!

Tomorrow he would see Snell. He would tell the old fellow of the infamy he had stumbled upon and declare himself as regarded the money.

And Snell called him a fool, or words to that effect.

"How are you going to get rid of it?" cried the old lawyer wrathfully. "If you start any real damfoolery I'll apply for trusteeship on the ground that you are not capable of handling your affairs. You'll refuse to touch a dollar of it, you say? What then? Money doesn't rot like vegetables. It'll keep on growing and mounting; and some far-off relatives will come into it and blow it like sailors on leave. If there is any taint in it take it out doing good with it to the community at large. Take the St. Lawrence River where it leaves Lake Ontario. It is drinkable; and yet it has drained great cities. It becomes pure by contact with air. Well, put your money out in the air, and it will become pure enough for all earthly purposes. And I tell you I don't give a tinker's dam what you have discovered. I'll hold until the crack of doom that your father never rooked anybody, and that he was as honest a man as ever walked this earth. You, his son, may doubt him, but I, his lawyer, never will."

"But why did he hide?"

"How do you know he hid?"

"No office of his own. The secret knocks on his door, as if he feared some one, and all that."

"And all that!" jeered Snell. "Boy, you've stumbled upon something queer, that's a fact; but damn me, if you've got the right angle. There's a mystery, I'll admit; but it concerns not your father's honesty, but the odd way he lived. He set a groove for himself and never deviated out of it, year in and year out."

"What about me? How did he treat me?" asked Bancroft, bitterly.

"He left you seven millions to do with as you pleased. He made it possible for you to become a scholar without risking the attendant evils of college life. He taught you to labor in the fields, to know the joy of an honestly earned dollar. But I understand what you mean—parental neglect, the lack of friendly communion between father and son. What you complain of is that he always held himself aloof; you never could get anywhere near him."

Bancroft nodded.

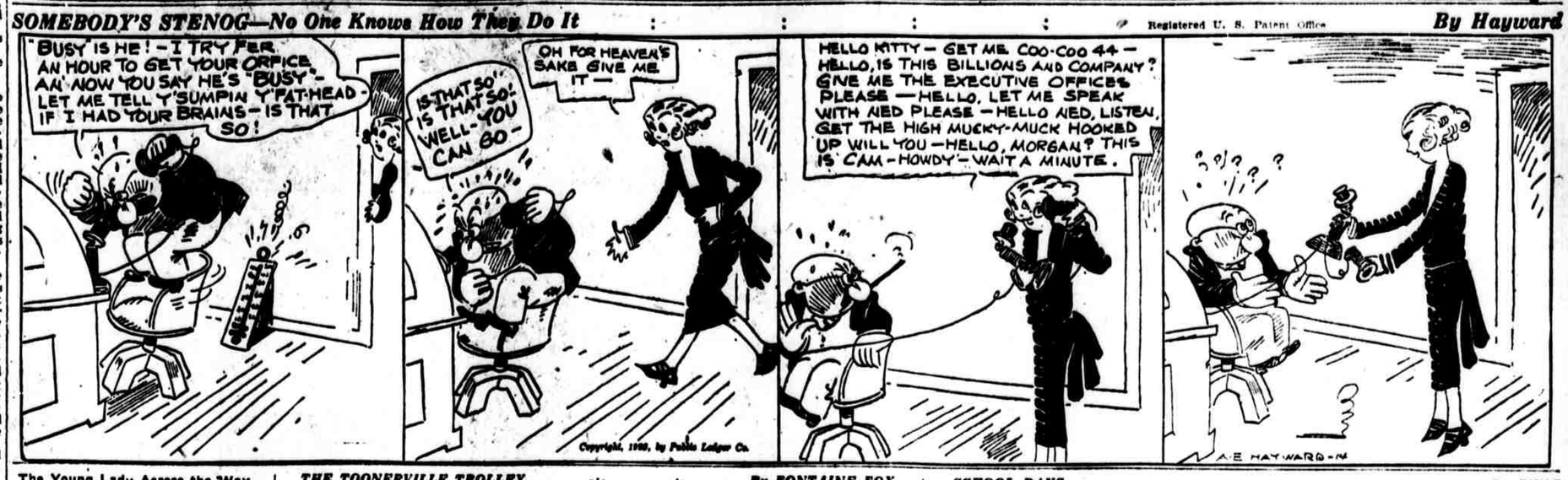
CONTINUED TOMORROW

THE GUMPS—Simple Andrew!

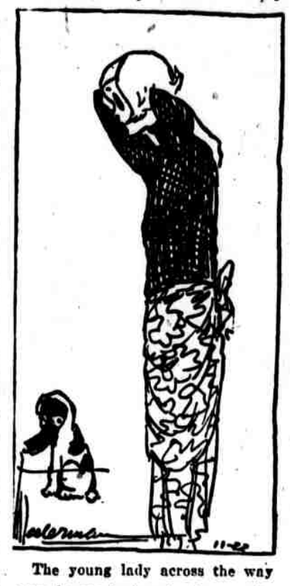
By Sidney Smith

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—No One Knows How They Do It

Registered U. S. Patent Office — By Hayward



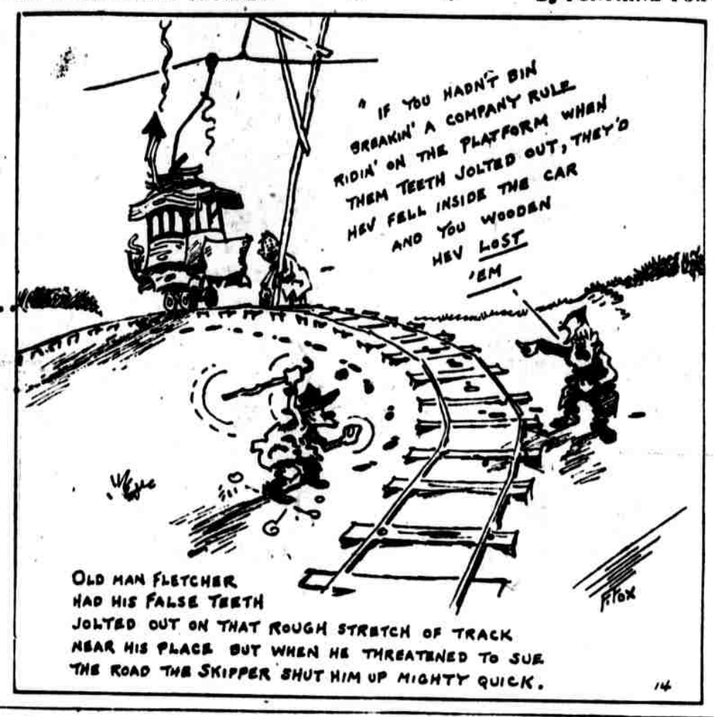
The Young Lady Across the Way



The young lady across the way says the car shortage has been pretty serious this fall and she never did understand why they didn't make each car two or three feet longer while they were about it.

THE TOONERVILLE TROLLEY

By FONTAINE FOX



SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG

PETEY—A Slight Improvement

By C. A. Voight

GASOLINE ALLEY—Who Spilled the Beans?

By King