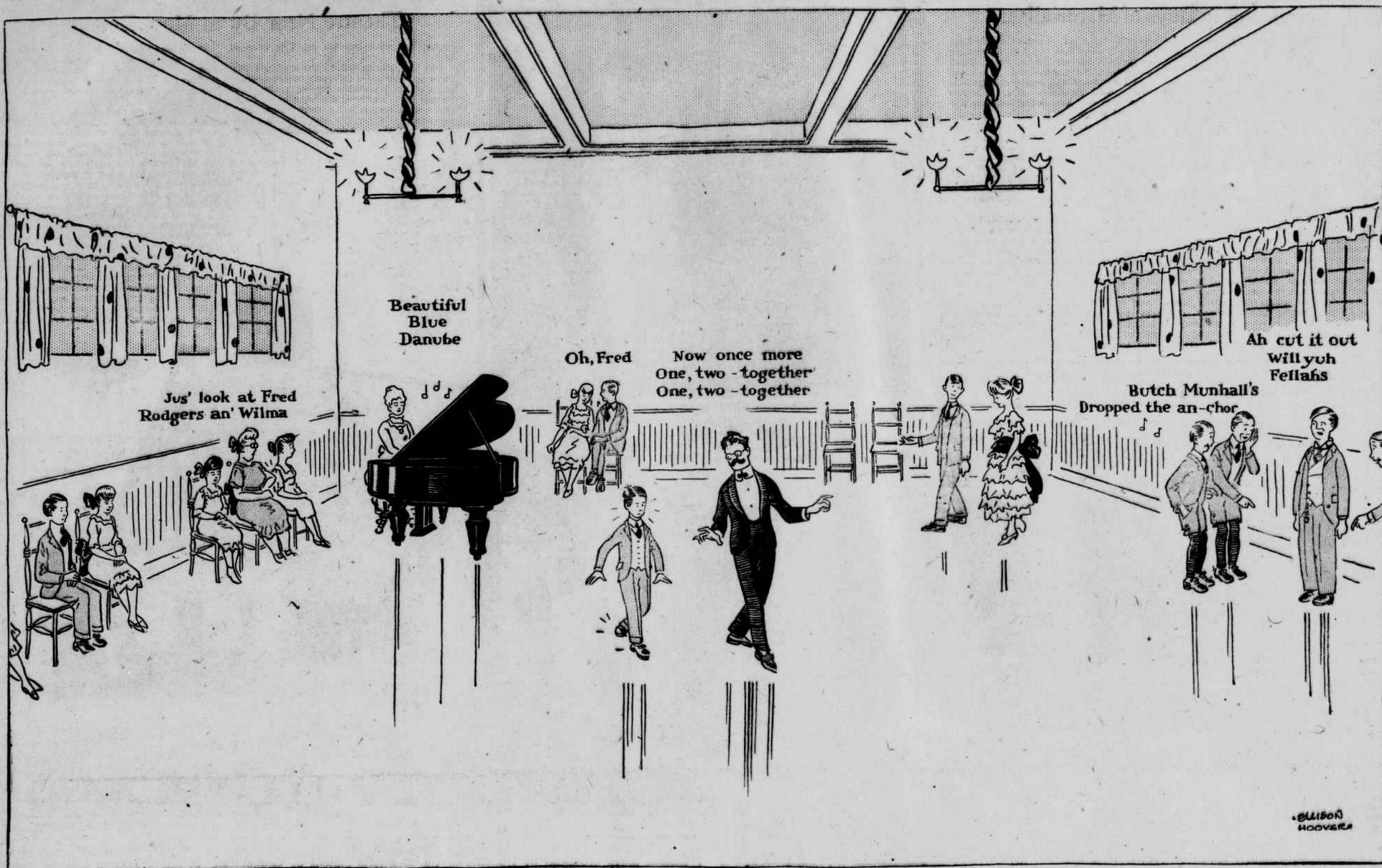


WHEN WERE THE GOOD OLD DAYS?

Dancing School, or Minding Your Ps and Qs



Romance Lurking Everywhere on the Sidewalks of New York

By EDWARD W. TOWNSEND.

FOUR of us who had served time as reporters met in Worthington's bachelor apartment and of course talked shop. We discussed exclusive newspaper stories, and when we had fibbed ourselves hoarse about the great stories we had turned in our host, who had rather outbided us, said: "But as a matter of fact, if a fact may safely be introduced into this company, it is easy enough to bring in a scoop. You've all been bragging about nothing at all."

We hooted him, but good naturedly. It is to be remarked that one forgives much in a friend who has as good a semi-professional brew as Worthington sets out.

"All you have to do," he added, "is to select a promising prospect in the street and follow; keep your eyes and ears open and you'll get a story, probably a scoop."

The next morning, a holiday, I stood at a corner of the Grave White Way on the look-out. Hundreds, thousands passed—rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer-merchant, chief, not to mention those walking the weary way looking for stage work. At last I was conscious of a little ripple of sensation as slight and pleasant as a baby breeze gently stirring for a moment the surface of a lake, then dying, leaving a surface as hard and polished as blue china.

I soon saw that this moment's unusual flutter was caused by a boy, 12 years old or so, I guessed, strolling down Broadway eating expensive candy from a box of it; happy, smiling, finding the world good and telling it so.

Boy's Smile Ingratiating And Brings Many Responses

It was the smile that first interested me; the sweetest, jolliest, well bred smile; a winsome smile which brought instant, cordial smiles in response. I saw a notorious gambler catch the smile, and, smiling, lift his hat in acknowledgment; a famous actress who slowed in her walk when the boy smiled at her, and her smile was penitence as she turned to look again at the gallant little figure.

It was his dress which finally determined me to make him a prospect; jacket and knickers of fine white flannel, stockings of the modish wool, soft linen Rollo collar with flowing blue silk scarf, patent leather pumps and a straw sailor hat cocked quite jauntily. These details I noted later; but at a glance one could see that the boy would not ordinarily be where he was unaccompanied. If not ordinarily, then extraordinarily. So I followed as he turned east into Forty-second street.

The last of his candies entertained him until he came to Fifth avenue and was halted by the up and down town traffic which was then having its innings. His attention was promptly absorbed by the windowed cage atop of steel supports in the centre of the avenue where a policeman was manipu-

How the Casual Discussion of Old Time Reporters Led to a Real O. Henry Story of a Banker's Runaway Son and His Day's Adventures

lating green, yellow and red electric lights. Eugene—that I finally learned was my prospect's name—was so engrossed that he failed to see that he, too, attracted the interest of many who passed or were impounded in swirling pools by the restraining arm of the law. The officer in the signal cage several times turned his eyes from the conflicting traffic rapidly he silently controlled to glance curiously at the boy who watched him so intently.

A man in citizen clothes, a detective I recognized as an old acquaintance, who had exchanged a few low spoken words with the foot police, caught a signalling nod from the officer in the cage, and, directed by a glance, quietly approached Eugene and asked pleasantly:

"Waiting for some one, Sonny?"
"No. Just watching the officer in the box. Funny work, what?"
"Fine work. Saves half a dozen ambulance calls a day. Let's see, what your name?"
"Jack Ormsby. Guess you are a plain clothes officer."

Surprises the Detective
By His Keen Observation

"What makes you guess that?" the other asked, after a surprised look.
"Oh, the way you spoke to the foot officer and answered the signal of the man in the box."

I gasped and wondered if the boy had been reading Chester-ton's *Father Brown* detective stories. He looked quite capable of it. The plain clothes man stared in amazement, then caught Eugene's smile, smiled in return and said: "Yep, Detective Henry Morrison. Now you be a chummy with me; where do you live?"

"Harlem."
"Harlem, eh? And where are you going, Jack?"
"Brooklyn."
"Bridge, tunnel or ferry?"
"Bridge. Isn't there a Williamsburg Bridge?"

The other, after studying the boy closely, said: "Tell an old pal what you are going to Brooklyn for."
"How could I cross a bridge without going to Brooklyn?" Eugene responded with a laugh so merry that his questioner laughed with him.

"Know your way to Williamsburg Bridge?"
"Over that way," Eugene answered, indicating a vague easterly course.
"I'm going that way, and I'll pilot you," Morrison said, and the three of us, I in the rear, took a crosstown car and transferred to the Third avenue surface. Our car was blocked just above Cooper Union, where the boy suddenly exclaimed, "Look! There's a man stealing a car." He pointed to the Cooper Union Hall entrance, where a man

was starting a car into which he had jumped. Morrison looked, dashed to the rear platform and off. The man who had started the machine must have recognized Morrison, for he gave the car terrific speed and turned it toward the Bowery, Morrison following in a commandeered car.

"How'd you know the guy was lifting the boat?" asked the conductor, who had heard Eugene's warning.
"From the way he acted before he got in," Eugene answered. "Let me off near Williamsburg Bridge, please."

At the corner of the Bowery and Kenmare street the conductor signalled to Eugene. "There's the Delancey Street," he said, pointing to the opposite side of the Bowery. "You can see the bridge at the end."

"You are very kind, I am sure," Eugene said, smiling.
"That kid is too fine haired and too swell dressed to be bumming around here alone," the conductor muttered to me as I followed my prospect.

Eugene found the parkway, a space made by widening old Delancey street, nothing like a park nor like anything he ever could have seen. Down its centre ran a fenced in space closed at its beginning, near the Bowery, and at its end, near the bridge, by subway kiosks, but of grass or flowers Eugene saw none; only a dusty strip bordered by benches occupied by human devils, some asleep, some mumbling over ragged papers printed in uncouth type, some staring vacantly, drift stranded in this backwater from the active Bowery currents.

Eugene seemed depressed by the drab outlook and would have turned back, I think, had not his sober reflections been brightened at the sight of a group of youngsters laughing over their sport, and it was odd that they laughed, for they seemed to be fighting.

The oldest of the group was an authoritative master of ceremonies, assigning his companions into pairs to fight, starting their bouts, instructing, stopping them. It enticed Eugene. The sport was attractive and—they were boys! He hesitated, probably wondering, dressed as he was, if they would let him play with them. Only their leader wore shoes, the others ragged knicker and torn cotton shirts, nothing else. But Eugene smiled coaxingly and asked, "What you fellows doing?"

"Boxin'. Is yer lamps on de blink?" the leader responded.
"Boxing for fun?"
"Naw, fer trainin'. Me, I'm goin' t'be a perfish. Ever box?"

"No. I'd like to try."
"All right. Lay off, youse kids."
The young master of ceremonies gave Eugene some excellent advice and with himself as opponent called time, and they were at attack, briskly. In a minute Eugene was

sitting in the dust, blood from his tingling nose streaming over his white clothes.

His opponent helped him to his feet and took his handkerchief, with which he squeezed Eugene's nose sharply, saying: "She won't bleed much more, but your dude close is on de bum." To remedy this he scraped up a handful of dust, rubbed it into the blood stains, observed the effect of the artistic device and commented, "Dat ain't so wise. Want to box some more?"

Eugene wanted some more, and in the second round was doing "fine," his mentor assured him, and both boys were puffing when one of the younger lads, doing sentry duty, cried, "Beat it! De bull!"

A policeman strolled toward them growling: "Now, you, Hogan, chase yourself back to where you belong or I'll spank the pants off all of you." The boys, not much frightened, were moving slowly away when the officer added, "Who's this you're palling with, Hogan?"

Eugene, instead of Hogan, answered: "I'm James Appleby, on my way to my father's office, and stopped to play with these boys." His smile for the policeman was a little rueful owing to swollen lips, bleeding nose and darkening eyes.

"You're taking a crooked way for down town," the officer commented. "If he don't know his way show him, you, Danny Hogan."

"Come on," Danny said to his new companion. "We can sell papers and drag down enough jack for movies and eats."

Thrill of Busy River Scene
Reflected in the Boy's Eyes

At Eugene's suggestion they first went out on the bridge. It may have been the river with its teeming life, the wharves with their suggestion of romance, ships unloading strange cargoes from far away ports, the navy yard with its grave gray warships, the distant view of sky searching towers, the graceful sweep of lacey steel high swung from island to island which kept Eugene silent, wistful eyed.

"What's happened you, Kid?" Danny asked, eyeing his new friend shrewdly.
"Oh—I must have been dreaming."
"I didn't mean for to give youse dat poke in de eye," Danny said, by way of expressing sympathy for one who could dream in a world offering so many things designed for wakefulness.

They retraced their steps and started south through narrow streets cluttered with pedlers, raucous with barter, swarming with multitudes of children who should have green fields for their play, not reeking asphalt.

"Say, was dat your true monaker youse give to de cop?" Danny asked.

"Monaker? Oh, name. No, I'm Thomas Parker. I'm going to call on a cousin. He's in a—a steamship office."

"Youse have a right to wash up foist at the Newsle Home where we gets our eats." Danny had a trading place in Park Row near the bronze image of benign Ben Franklin, and, after he had loaned an assortment of evening papers to Eugene, allowed his pupil to share his stand. Eugene's smile, handicapped as it was, won trade, and he had repaid Danny's loan and had a pocket full of nickels and dimes when, after a look at City Hall clock, he said:

"I'll have to go now. You have given me a bully party, Danny. I hope we meet again."

"Aw, dat's all right," Danny assured him. "I was hep dat youse was a sport de way youse took de bump on de beak I handed youse."

Rejoicing that my long waiting for developments seemed about to end I followed the boys as they turned south, Danny promising to show his friend a subway entrance after they should have had their "eats."

When Detective Morrison turned up at headquarters with a long sought for automobile thief and told how the thief had been pointed out to him by a clever little swell kid he had been interested in his captain interrupted to ask, "Did this clever little chap happen to have an attractive smile?"

"The prettiest you ever saw," Morrison assured him.

"Go and get him!" his captain ordered with great decision.

After hearing brief particulars of a story from his chief Morrison telephoned to the car sheds of the Third avenue surface line: "Please locate car 6804, conductor's cap number 537, passed Cooper Union going south a couple of hours ago."

It was due, the starter informed him, at Park Row and Broadway in half an hour. Presently the officer was on the same car again. Sure, the conductor remembered the kid. He left the car at Delancey street and walked toward the bridge. This and much more I learned from Morrison when he told me his end of the story that evening.

It was only routine work for Morrison then; questioning Delancey Park police, Mrs. Hogan—an old Fourth warder, as was Morrison—the Newsboys' Home secretary, the plodding officer at last overtook the three of us.

"Well, Eugene," he said cheerfully, "how are you headed?"

"Home," Eugene said, "after I've treated my friend to dinner."

"Danny Hogan won't be any the loser if you come home with me now. There's only

about five thousand uniformed cops and a couple of hundred private detectives looking for you, old timer."

Morrison let me ride up town with them in a taxi, and when Eugene fell asleep, which was the instant he curled up in a back seat corner, Morrison explained: Eugene, only son of Banker Darius Thorpe, went that morning with his mother's woman secretary to a theatre ticket office.

When the secretary was in the office Eugene slipped out of the car without being seen by the chauffeur. Ten minutes later Banker Thorpe, frightened cold about kidnapping, was using his powerful influence with every high police officer in this city and every town within a hundred miles. All the family, all the servants, twenty of them, gave descriptions. Morrison's captain happened to be on the wire when the Thorpe housekeeper was telephoning.

"You'll know 'im," she said, "by his smile; the sweetest smile in the world."
Morrison took sleepy but smiling Eugene into the Thorpe home in Madison avenue and when he came out he wore the contented look which, some assert, comes only from merit rewarded—well rewarded. Morrison nodded when I made some such remark, and then said: "Besides, I've something for Mrs. Hogan to start a savings bank account for Danny."

Banker Thorpe assured the reporters that night that there was nothing in the story. The adventurous youngster had taken a notion to visit his father's office, but was brought home without finishing his trip. It would be a great comfort to Mrs. Thorpe if nothing was said about it in the papers, so the editors kindly obliged—and so have I; for the banker's name is in truth very unlike Thorpe.

Worthington is right in principle; there is an exclusive story almost anywhere for the patient searcher. I shall call on Worthington—have I mentioned his semi-professional brew?—and congratulate him.

Super Cement Made

ANALOGOUS to the super-man and other super-products, there is now being produced what is known as super-cement. It is a Canadian product and is said to be waterproof and to have other excellent properties.

According to an abstract in a concrete trade paper, it is manufactured by mixing gypsum and a catalytic solution with cement clinker in the ordinary process of Portland cement manufacture. It is claimed that concrete made with this cement is a dense, impervious mass, waterproof and oilproof and stronger than Portland cement, though the hardening is slower.

This cement requires more water to produce a paste of normal consistency than ordinary Portland cement. The increase in strength is specially marked in the case of cement and sand mortar, and the difference increases with time.