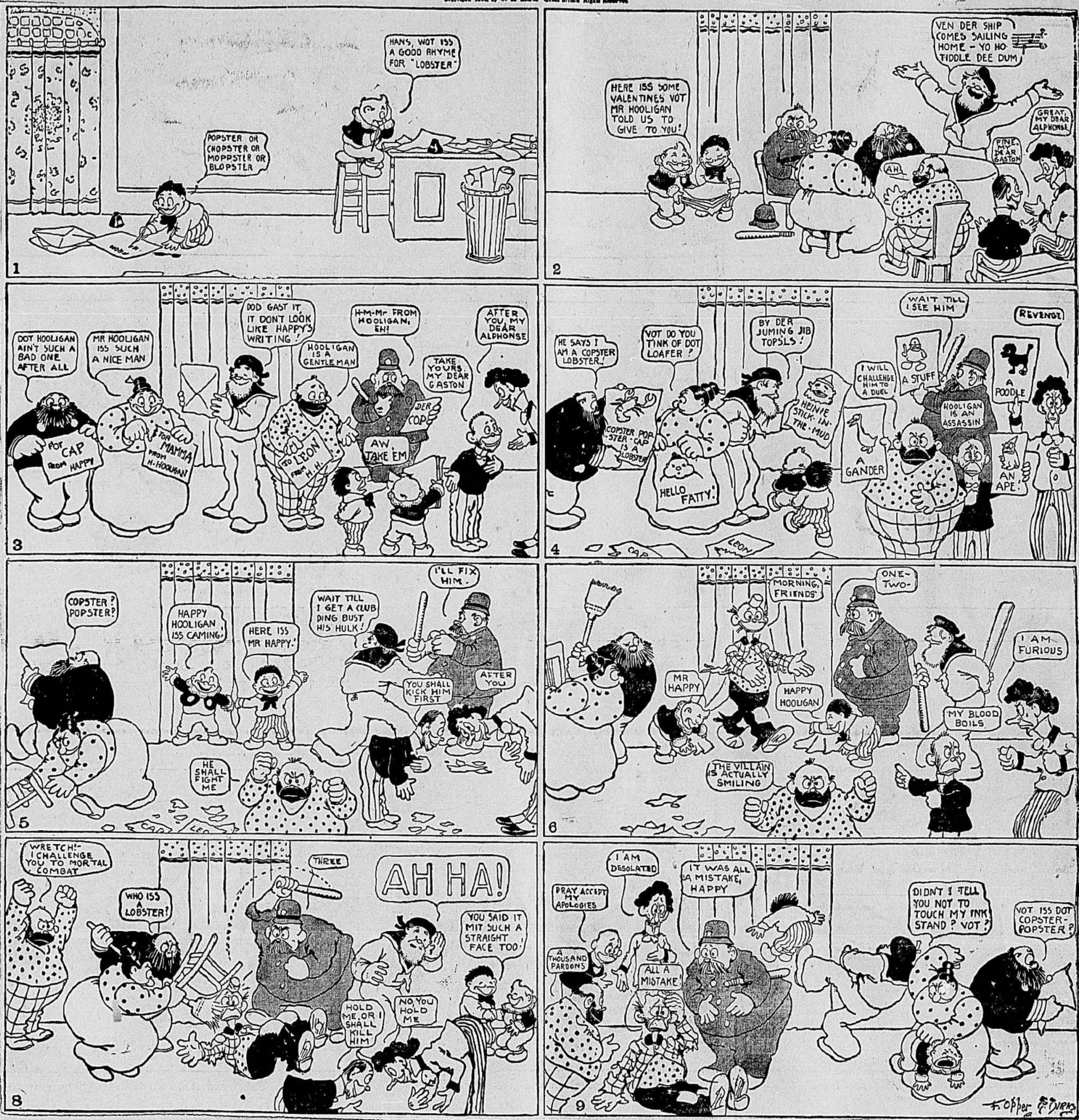


St. Valentine's Day in the Katzenjammer Household.

Those Dreadful Kids Give Every One a Valentine and Blame It All on Poor, Innocent Happy Hooligan.

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THE SEVEN SECRETS

(Continued from Tenth Page.)

Ambler, was that the poor fellow had been secretly poisoned. Nearly a fortnight passed, and I heard nothing of Ambler. He was still "out of town." Day by day passed, but nothing of note transpired. Sir Bernard was still suffering from a slight touch of sciatica at home, and on visiting him one Sunday I found him confined to his bed, grumbling and peevish. He was somewhat eccentric in his miserly habits and his hatred of society, beyond doubt; and the absurdities which his enemies attributed to him were not altogether unfounded. But he had at all events the rare quality of professing for his profession a respect nearly akin to enthusiasm. Indeed, according to his views, the faculty possessed almost infallible qualities. In confidence he had more than once admitted to me that certain of his colleagues practicing in Harley Street were amazing donkeys; but he would never have allowed any one else to say so. From the moment a man acquired that diploma which gave him the right over life and

death, that man became in his eyes an august personage for the world at large. It was a crime, he thought, for a patient not to submit to his decision, and certainly it must be admitted that his success in the treatment of nervous disorders had been most remarkable. "You were at that lecture by Deboutin at Paris, the other day?" he exclaimed to me suddenly, while I was seated at his bedside describing the work I had been doing for him in London. "I didn't you tell me you were going there?" "I went quite unexpectedly—with a friend." "With whom?" "Ambler, Jeyons." "Oh, that detective fellow!" laughed the old physician. "Well," he added, "it was all very interesting, wasn't it?" "Very—especially your own demonstrations. I had no idea that you were in correspondence with Deboutin." He laughed; then with a knowing look said: "Ah, my dear fellow, nowadays it doesn't do to tell any one of your own resources. The only way is to spring it upon the profession as a great triumph; just as Koch did his cure for tuberculosis. One must create an impression nowadays, if only with a quick remedy,

The day of the steady plodder is past; it's all hustle, even in medicine." "Well, you certainly did make an impression," I said smiling. "Your experiments were a revelation to the profession. They were talking of them at the hospital only yesterday." "H'm. They thought me an old fogey, eh? But, you see, I've been keeping pace with the times, Boyd. A man to succeed nowadays must make a boom with something, it matters not what. For years I've been experimenting in secret, and some day I will show them further results of my researches—and they will come upon the profession like a thunderbolt, staggering belief." The old man chuckled to himself as he thought of his scientific triumph and how one day he would give forth to the world a truth hitherto unsuspected. We chatted for a long time, mostly upon technicalities which cannot interest the reader, until suddenly he said: "I'm getting old, Boyd. These constant attacks I have render me unfit to go to town and sit in judgment on that pack of silly women who rush to consult me whenever they have a headache or an aching husband. I think that very soon I ought to retire. I've done sufficient hard work all the years since I

was a 'locum' down in Oxfordshire. I'm nearly worn out." "Oh no," I said. "You mustn't retire yet. If you did the profession would lose one of its most brilliant men!" "Enough of compliments," he snapped, turning wearily on his pillow. "I'm sick and tired of it all. Better to retire while I have fame than to sulver it. When I give up you will step into my shoes, Boyd, and it will be a good thing for you." Such a suggestion was quite unexpected. I had never dreamed that he contemplated handing over his practice to me. Certainly it would be a good thing for me if he did. It would give me a chance such as few men ever had. True I was well-known to his patients and had worked hard in his interests, but that he intended to hand the practice over to me I had never contemplated. Hence I thanked him most heartily. Yes, Sir Bernard had been my benefactor always. "All the women know you," he went on in his snappish way. "You are the only man to take my place. They would come to you, but not to a new man. All I can hope is that they won't bore you with their domestic troubles—as they have done me," and he smiled. "Oh," I said. "More than once I, too, have been compelled to listen to the do-

mestle secrets of certain households. It really is astonishing what a woman will tell her doctor, even though he may be young." "The old man laughed again. "Ah!" he sighed. "You don't know women as I know them, Boyd. You've got your experience to gain. Then you'll hold them in abhorrence—just as I do. They call me a woman-hater," he grunted. "Perhaps I am—for I've had cause to hold the feminine mind and that feminine passion equally in contempt." "Well," I laughed, "there's not a man in London who is more qualified to speak from personal experience than yourself. So I anticipate a pretty rough time when I've had years of it, as you have." "And yet you want to marry!" he said, looking me straight in the face. "Of course, you love Ethelwynn M'ward. Every man at your age loves. It is a malady that occurs in the teens and declines in the thirties. I should have thought that your affection of the heart had been about cured. It is surely time it was." "It is true that I love Ethelwynn. I declared, rather annoyed, 'and I intend to marry her.' " "If you do, then you spoil all your chances of success. The class of women

who are my patients would much rather consult a confirmed bachelor than a man who has a jealous wife hanging to his coat-tails. The doctor's wife must always be a long-suffering person." I smiled; and then our conversation turned upon his proposed retirement which was to take place in six months' time. I returned to London by the last train and on entering my room found a telegram from Ambler making an appointment to call on the following evening. The message was dated from Eastbourne, and was the first I had received from him for some days. "Next morning I sat in Sir Bernard's consulting room as usual, receiving patients, and the afternoon I spent on the usual hospital round. About 8 o'clock Ambler arrived, drank a brandy and soda with a reflective air, and then suggested that we might dine together at the Cavour, a favorite haunt of his. At table I endeavored to induce him to explain his movements and what he had discovered; but he was still disinclined to tell me anything. He worked always in secret, and until facts were clear said nothing. It was a peculiarity of his to remain dumb even to his most intimate friends concerning any inquiries he

was making. He was a man of moody, with an active mind and a still tongue—two qualities essential to the successful unravelling of mysteries. Having finished dinner we lit cigars and took a cab back to my rooms. On passing along Harley Street a suddenly occurred to me that in the morning I had left a small case of instruments in Sir Bernard's consulting room, and that I might require them for a patient I called that night. Therefore, I stopped the cab, dismissed it, and knocked at Sir Bernard's door. Ford, on opening it, surprised me by announcing that his master, whom I had left in bed on the previous night, had returned to town suddenly, but was engaged. On approaching the door, however, I was startled by hearing a woman's voice raised in angry, reproachful words, followed immediately by the sound of scuffle and then a stifled cry. Without further hesitation I turned the handle. The door was locked. (To be continued.)