

Broadway Jones

FROM THE PLAY OF GEORGE M. COHAN BY EDWARD MARSHALL
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(Continued from last Issue.)

"No, Mrs. Gerard."

After another tiny hesitation she held out her hand to Rankin. "May I present the earl of Cortland?" she said, leading the abashed butler forward.

"What!" Broadway was astonished almost to the point of physical collapse.

"It's true," she went on gravely. "We've had a thorough understanding, and Rankin has agreed to become an earl."

Again Broadway's surprise was almost more than he could quietly support.

"Oh, don't be astonished! It's my only protection.—Have I your solemn promise that you'll not divulge the secret?"

"I give you my word of honor," he said fervently.

"Very well. Goodby!"

He earnestly shook hands with her, "Goodby, Mrs. Gerard. I hope you will be very happy."

"It isn't a question of happiness, Jackson," she said slowly, and in a way that somewhat worried him. "I simply don't want to be humiliated. You understand?"

"Yes; I understand, Mrs. Gerard."

She turned to the earl of Cortland. "Shake hands with Mr. Jones, Rankin."

Jackson pulled him to one side, almost indignantly. "See here, Rankin, do you mean to tell me that you'd do such a mean contemptible thing as to marry a woman deliberately for her money?"

"Yes, sir" said Rankin very gravely, "and thank you, sir, for the opportunity."

"Come, earle," Mrs. Gerard called softly.

"Yes, Beatrice." He dropped the hand of his erstwhile employer and took the arm of his affianced wife.

"We have just six minutes before train time," she admonished him, and turned to Broadway, who was standing, dazed. "Goodby!"

He had gone back to the house and was standing leaning somewhat weakly against a pillar of the porch, unable even to make her presence known to the two girls whose laughing, low-toned gossip he could hear from behind the vines, when Wallace came up with his father. He listened to his friend's remarks mechanically.

"Yes," he was saying, "the entire population of the town is about four thousand. The plant employs about seven hundred." Then, catching sight of Broadway: "There's Jackson now. Tell him what you just told me."

Broadway went to meet them, glad to have the opportunity to test life and make sure that it was real even if the proof showed that the elder Wallace was entirely hostile.

"They offered you a million and a half, didn't they?" asked Bob.

"Yes. That's what they offered—a million and a half."

"Mr. Jones," said the elder Wallace, not without enthusiasm, "my son has been telling me of the grand, single-handed fight that you are making against this giant corporation. I admire your pluck, sir."

Broadway looked at him with real surprise and hearty gratitude. It seemed that even this was coming out all right!

"You deserve all the encouragement and assistance possible," said this suddenly delightful gentleman. "Your loyalty to the people of this little town is commendable, sir. You deserve great credit, and I want to shake your hand."

"Thanks, Mr. Wallace, but the credit really belongs to Bob." The delight which Broadway felt was plainly audible in his voice.

Bob laughed. "I knew he'd say that!"

"He has told me of your modesty," said the elder Wallace. "I am very proud that you have taken him into the firm, and if advertising has any market value we'll fight them to a finish. I have promised my son to return here Monday morning. I may have a proposition to put before you. I'd like to see him an equal partner in a business with such a promising future."

"I don't know what to say, Mr. Wallace," Broadway answered, and he really did not.

"Monday will be time enough," the elder Wallace answered genially. "I have an appointment with Pembroke at his house tomorrow. After I have had ten minutes' walk with him, I promise you that the Consolidated people will make no further attempts to absorb. But now I must go. Good night!"

Jackson grasped his hand with fervor. What a night this was!

"Going to motor back?" asked Bob.

"Yes; I prefer my motor car to the railroad. See you Monday. Good night!"

"Isn't it like a dream?" asked Bob after the last glimmer of glow from the car's headlight had vanished down the road.

"I can't believe it's true."

"He wants to buy a half interest in your business. Did you get that?"

"All I want is enough to pay my debts."

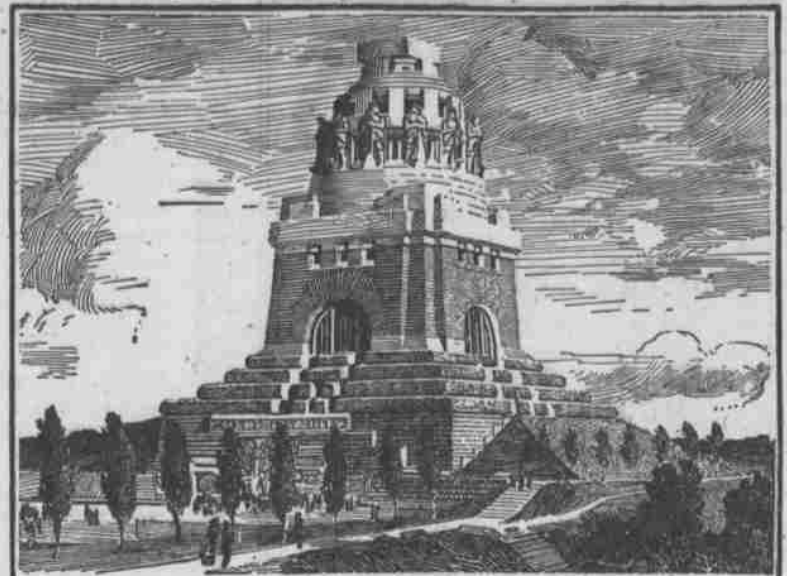
Bob laughed. "Don't tell him that; he's a business man!"

"But—"

"I think you'd better let me handle that for you."

"Will you? Fine!" It suddenly occurred to him that he must tell his friend at once about the Rankin-Gerard episode, but he did not mean to break his promise to the ancient bride. "Say, Bob, I've just—I've just had a telephone message from New York. What do you think has happened?"

"Go on, tell me."



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"Mrs. Gerard has denied her engagement to me and is going to marry the earl of Cortland."

Wallace took this in a gulp of joy. "Honestly?"

"I just got the word."

"A million congratulations, old pal!" In a mad enthusiasm he shook hands with Broadway. "Three cheers for everybody in the world!"

Broadway seized him and, in an access of perfect satisfaction with the way the world was wagging they danced there in the moonlight.

"The earl of Cortland?" Bob exclaimed at length. "Who the deuce is he? I never heard of him."

"I have. I've seen him."

"You have? What does he look like?"

Broadway paused, as if in thought. "Well, he's the very image of—say, you know my butler?"

"Rankin?"

"Yes. Well, he looks just like him. You'd hardly know them apart."

"You don't say?"

"Yes; a wonderful resemblance."

"I wonder what became of Rankin?" Bob speculated idly. He had liked Rankin.

"I think he surmised I was going to locate here and he didn't like the town."

Bob nodded. "Gone, is he? Well, maybe that was it."

The girls caught sight of them as they approached the house and Clara ran to them. "Oh, there you are! Where's your father, Bob?"

"He's gone."

"Oh, I wanted to see him!"

"You'll see him Monday." He laughed. "Come on. Let's go and get an orange ice-cream soda."

"Oh, let's! Come on, Josie."

"We'll be right along," said Broadway. "You go on ahead."

Josie came down the steps with less precipitancy than Clara, but she did not really hesitate. Broadway went to her with hand outstretched to help and that peculiarly earnest face he always wore when thinking deeply, even of the most delightful subjects.

"Do you care if I call you 'Josie?'" he inquired. "He calls her 'Clara' and she calls him 'Bob.'"

"Why, that's my name," said she with the simplicity of the frank country maiden.

He wasted not a moment's time.