

# LITTLE GROWING BIRD IN WINDY LAND



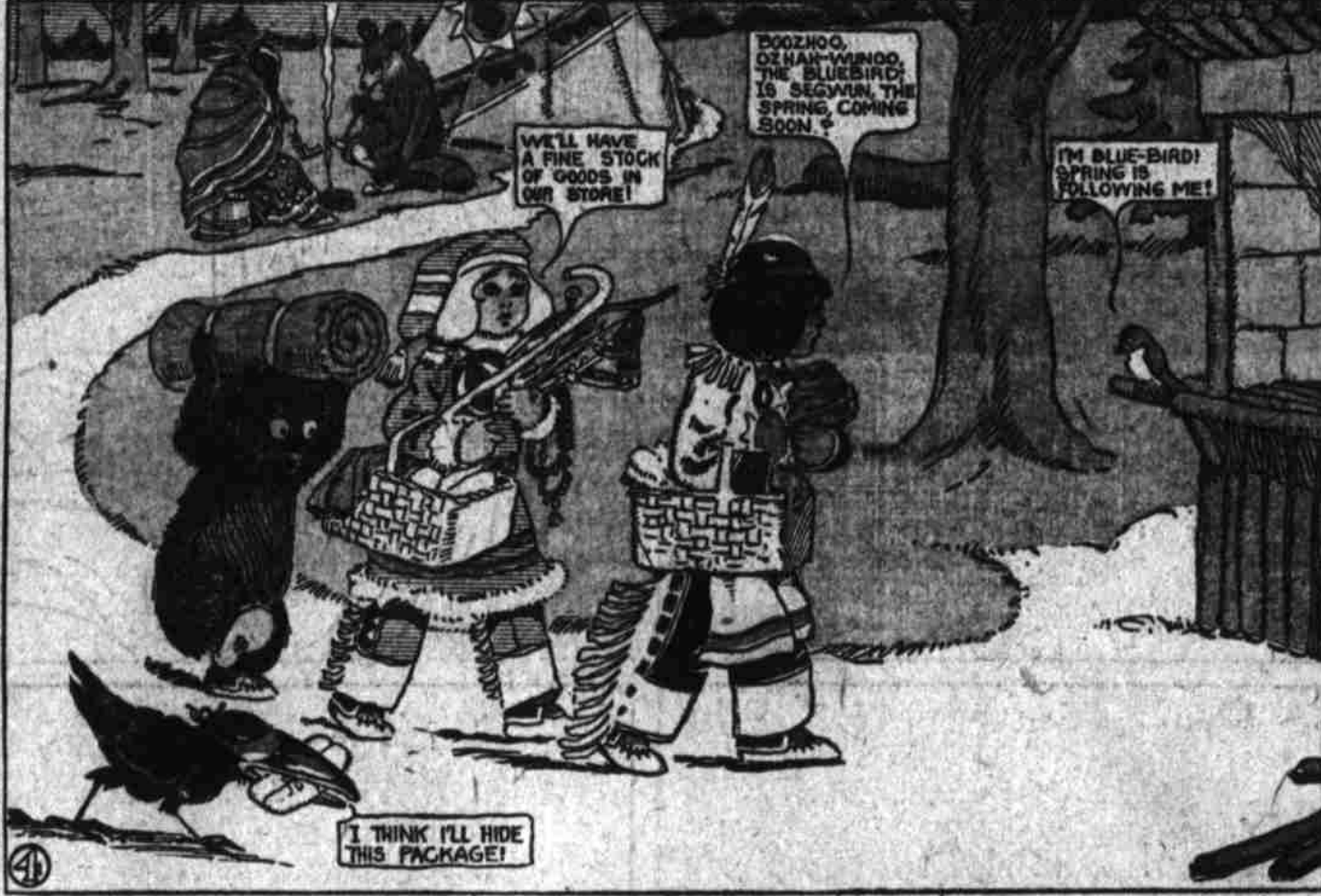
Aundak, the Crow, soon recovered from the rough treatment the Wild Crows had given him, and, except for a bruised eye, was soon up and around again about the same as usual. The weather was now so mild that the children no longer wore their mittens nor mufflers, and the snow had all disappeared. But the ground was still very wet in the woods, and Nokomis would not let the children go out to play until it became drier. Growing Bird and Yellow Hair wondered how they could amuse themselves in the meantime, and it was the little girl who first had an idea. She said to Little Growing Bird: "Let's make a summer Playhouse and keep store; we can sell things just like the Paleface People do in the Settlements!" Growing Bird thought it was a good idea, so he grabbed hold of Big Bear, and cried: "Come on and help us build playhouse!"



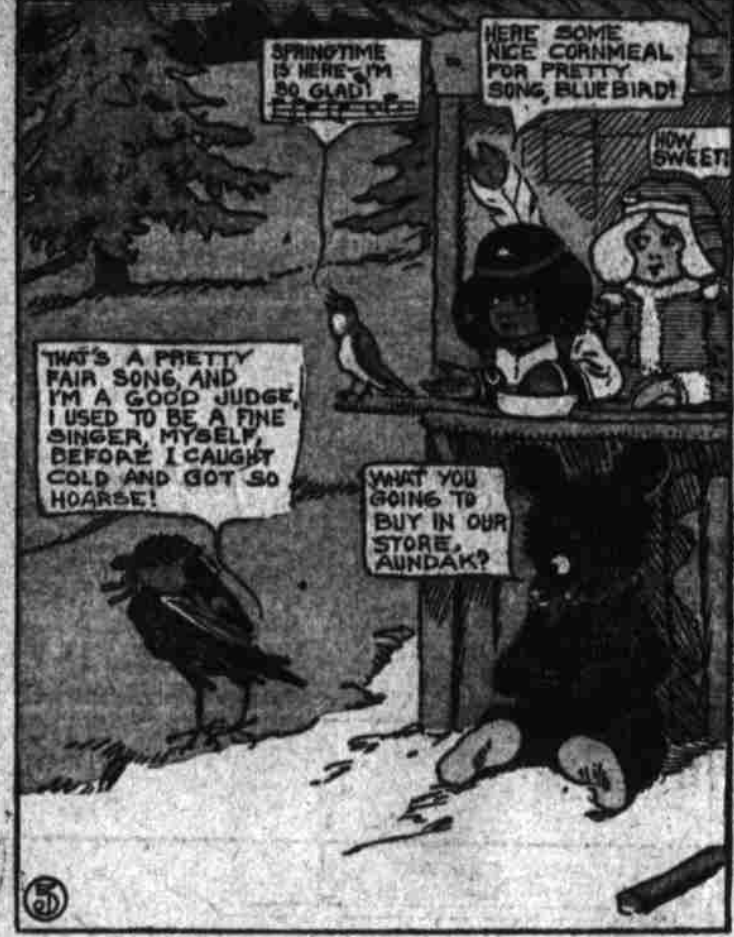
Yellow Hair coaxed Nokomis to come along, too, and help them; so they all went to the big rock, behind the Wigwam, and set to work. Nokomis chopped down a lot of small trees to make poles for the framework of the house, and trimmed off spruce branches to cover it with. Big Bear—because he was the biggest and strongest—planted the poles in the ground and laid others across the top to support the roof. Growing Bird stripped the bark from a fallen birch tree and brought it to Big Bear, who placed it on the roof and around the sides to keep out the wind and rain. Yellow Hair carried bundles of spruce branches, and even Little Bear toddled around pretending to work. But Aundak said he had a "black eye," and, of course, couldn't think of working—but, for that matter, he was so black all over you couldn't tell whether his eye was black or not!



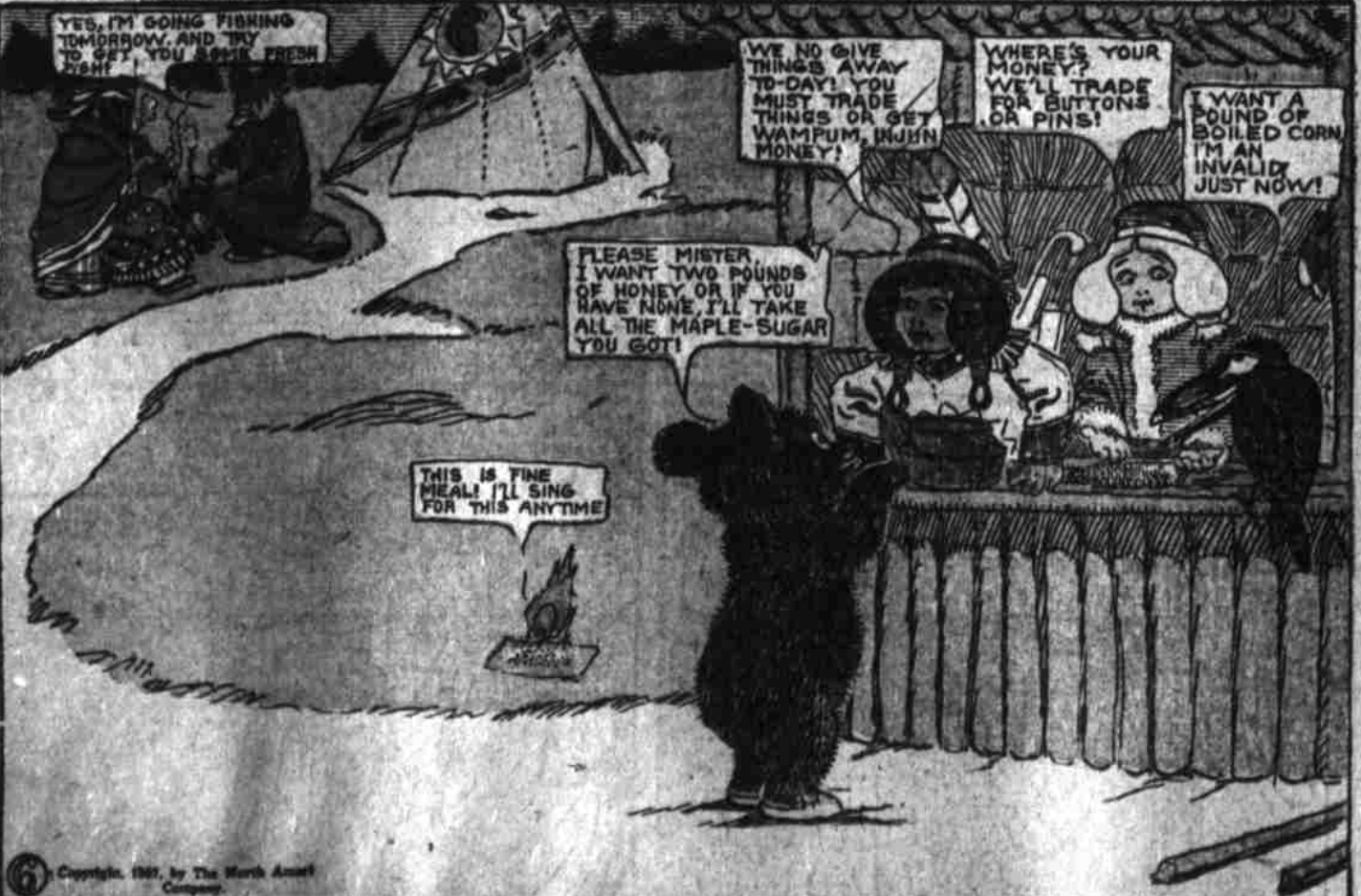
After a while the little Play-Store was finished and a counter made of smooth poles built across the open front. Then Big Bear and Nokomis went back to the Wigwam to smoke Opwah-gun, the Peace Pipe, and rest. While Growing Bird was putting the finishing touches on the walls of birch bark, Aundak spoke up and said: "Ho! Ho! You haven't anything to sell in your fine store!"



But Yellow Hair knew that the Birch-Bark Trunk was full of presents and toys that Nanna-boosho, the Indian Santa Claus, had given them at Christmas time, and, besides, there was plenty maple-sugar and other nice things to eat that they could borrow from Nokomis, so he was not worried. Then they went to the Wigwam and loaded up with all sorts of things to stock their little store. Little Bear took a bundle on his head, and even Aundak carried a small package in his beak. When they returned to the store they saw that a pretty little bird was perched on one of the poles of the counter. It was Ozah-wunoo, the Bluebird, the friend of Segwin, the Spring Spirit. They were very glad to see him, because, whenever Bluebird comes singing around, you may be sure that the springtime has come at last.



The children put all the things in the Play-Store and then, after greeting Bluebird, asked him to "sing something!" The little bird was quite willing and sang for them his "Spring Song" so prettily that Growing Bird gave him a handful of nice cornmeal to pay him for his music. Aundak cocked his head and listened to the song and remarked that HE had been a fine singer himself before he became so hoarse. Well—



They all thought that it was now about time for business to begin, so Aundak flew up on the counter and asked for some sweet corn: "And I want it boiled SOFT," said he, "because I'm supposed to be an invalid just now!" Little Bear asked for what HE liked best, which was HONEY! But, as there was none in stock, he said MAPLE-SUGAR would do—provided there was PLENTY OF IT! Of course, no one can keep even a Play-Store very long if he GIVES AWAY all his goods, so the Children asked them to show their money. When Little Bear and Aundak said they "hadn't any," it was explained to them that if they had no Shoos-c-yah, or Silver Money, they should get Me-ria, Indian Money, or Wampum. But if they hadn't ANY KIND of money at all, then they must bring in things that they could trade for goods.



While the children were explaining this, Little Bear and Aundak kept watching their chance, and, suddenly, they grabbed up from the counter the things they had asked for, and skedaddled as fast as they could get away! They giggled as they called back to "charge up the goods to their account till Saturday!" Now this wasn't the right way to play at store-keeping at all, and it vexed the children very much indeed. But never mind! You will see what happened to the little black rascals next week, and how they were punished for stealing! But, anyway, the first song-bird to come around your home in the spring is the pretty Bluebird, and if you put out a few crumbs for him, and do not frighten him, he will sing you a song in payment for them. That is why people say of anything they get very cheaply, that they "got it for a mere song!" A. T. C.