# The SHINING TALENT

By ELEANOR EARLY © 1929 by NEA Service Inc.

THIS HAS HAPPENED
MOLLY BURNHAM, phenomenal-ly successful young playwright, has a second success on Broadway. "Sacrifice," the newest play, has been attacked by the censors. But, instead of being frightened, the pro-ducer and the actors are delighted. It will assure continued popularity, they say, and guarantee the success of the play.

Molly, however, is perturbed. The objectives the censors apply to her play hurt her. She resolves to avoid controversy, and devote her en-tire attention to little RITA NEW-TON, the adorable child of her best friend, who has died. Molly has promised to take care of Rita, and bestows wealth and love upon the child.

BOB NEWTON, Rita's father, of whom Molly is not particularly fond, comes often to see his little daughter. Molly knows of certain shadowy epi-sodes in Bob's past.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
CHAPTER XXXII

"By the way," began Bob awk-wardly, "you remember Miss Smith, Molly?"

She raised her eyebrows inquir-ingly. "Of course."

"I hope you didn't think there was anything wrong?" he hazarded.

Molly preserved a frigid silence.

"Did you?" he demanded.

"I've no desire to talk about your friends," she objected.

"My friends!" he laughed.

"You told me she was a very good friend of yours."

"Did I?" Bob colored uncomfort-ably. "I don't remember."

"Well, you certainly did. Coming home in the taxi that night from the station. Anyhow, since you've brought the subject up yourself, I may as well tell you that your little friend came to the Copley to see me. And I must say, Bob, that I think your taste is perfectly execrable! Also, I think it's wretchedly bad form for you to talk about the girl. I'm sure I'm not interested."

"I thought maybe you might be," he drawled.

"Well, I'm not!"

"Different from most women, isn't you, Molly? Superior to gos-sip and scandal, and all that sort of thing? Wouldn't be a bit interested in getting the real low down on me?"

"No, I wouldn't. Do you think I'm going to sit and chat with my best friend's husband about his in-discretas?"

She rose angrily.

"You'd better go home, Bob."

"Oh, all right."

He rose leisurely, and knocked the ashes out of his pipe in the pink porcelain fireplace.

"Only—well, Elsie was killed yes-terday, Molly. Automobile accident in Montreal. Peculiar coincidence—you remember the way Isadora Dun-can was killed? Scarf knotted about her throat. The same thing hap-pened to Elsie. And the strange thing about it was that Elsie danced in an Isadora Duncan ballet once. She simply idolized that woman. You may not believe it—but Elsie could dance. She broke her ankle a few years ago. And that rather finished her . . ."

Molly turned on him fiercely.

"You beast!" she cried. "Haven't you any heart at all?"

"But you don't understand," he interrupted. "If Elsie hadnt gone to Montreal, she'd never have been killed."

"What has that to do with it?" she stormed. "The poor girl's dead, isn't she? That difference does it make whether she went to Montreal or not?"

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Bob was filling his pipe again, packing the tobacco thoughtfully. "My father lives in Montreal," he said. "He's one of the richest men in Canada. You never knew that, did you, Molly? Rita never told you? Rita was proud as Lucifer. She wouldn't take a penny of the old man's money. You see, he cut me off when he learned I'd been married. He'd have let us starve, to bring me to terms. When the baby was born, I wrote him that he had a grand-daughter. It didn't seem to make any difference—one kid more or less in the States. He didn't even answer my letter. Rita said that settled it. I was sore as blazes with he old man. But I admired Rita for her pride. There were times I'd have gone to him on my knees. But Rita said she'd never speak to me again, if I asked him for a penny. And I never did.

"About a year ago I met Elsie. She came from Montreal, and she knew who my dad was. She was a nice kid, and she played her cards pretty. It's a long story, Molly. I won't bore you with details.

"But Elsie went to Montreal to blackmail my father. She was going to ask him for $50,000. If he wouldn't give it to her, she was going to sue me for breach of promise. And she was going to ask damages of $100,000."

Molly looked at him contemptu-ously.

"And so," she said, "you're glad the girl is dead?"

"Naturally," he declared. "Think of the scandal she'd have kicked up, think of the baby. And yourself, so far as that goes. Pretty story, isn't it? Give you material maybe for another play. Plenty of dirt, and first-hand chance at it all.

"Elsie'd been hanging around for a long time, waiting to get at my dad. I understand she made several attempts to see my father. She'd probably have hired a lawyer, if she'd lived. You can't blame me for being glad she's dead!"

Molly averted her glance distaste-fully.

"I think you're a very hard-heart-ed person," she said. "They say girls take after their fathers, and boys after their mothers. I hope that's wrong, because I should hate to see little Rita evincing any of your char-acteristics."

"So should I," he agreed cheer-fully. "But I think that's the bunk, Molly. Kids show the result of their environment more than their breed-ing. Rita'll be all right, while you keep your eye on her."

Molly sighed. "I hope so," she said.

"Suppose," he went on, "Elsie had blackmailed me into marrying her. Or else letting her stay on in the flat. Rita would have picked up her cheap-ness, mannerisms. And, as the child grew older, she'd have absorbed something of Elsie's personality. Her viewpoint. Her general laxity. All the goodness that Rita bequeathed her daughter, couldn't have elimin-ated the contamination of daily con-tact.

"It's a wonderful thing for little Rita to be here with you. It's going to make a wonderful girl of her."

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Molly rawed.

"It's getting pretty late, Bob," she observed. "You'd better save the story for another night."

He rose promptly.

"I don't blame you," he admitted, "for being pretty rough on me. I've been a good deal of an egg. But there's nothing I wouldn't do for little Rita, or for you, Molly."

"Thanks," she murmured. "Awfully good of you, I'm sure."

When he had gone, she wrote two letters. One to Red, and one to Jack. It was fun, writing Red. Fun, and a lot of satisfaction. He had heard, of course, of the success of "Sacrifice." And the efforts of the cen-sors.

Red loved that sort of thing. Cen-sorship infuriated him. And nothing pleased him more than to have the censored profit by the actions of the censors. Divine justice, he called it.

He had sent her a congratulatory wire from Ottawa, begging details. She would send him what clippings she had, and tell him how pleased Mr. Durbin was with the activities of the censors.

While she was writing, Durbin himself phoned. Everything was go-ing wonderfully, he declared. Seats were selling three weeks in advance. The evening papers had all carried stories. And there was talk of pad-locking the theater.

"I wish you'd come over," he coaxed. "The little girl I have on publicity says she could arrange a lot of things, if you were on the spot."

"What kind of things?"

"Oh, interviews, and personal ap-pearances. She thought if I should give you a luncheon, and invite a lot of writers, it might be a good idea. Then she said something about your doing some lecturing on cen-sorship. I wish you would, Molly."

She laughed at his eagerness.

"Not even for you," she retorted. "I'd rather go back to Snodgrass."

But it was something amusing to write Red. She filled sheet after sheet with the tale. He would be delighted with the enterprise of the censors. Mr. Durbin said they'd done more for the play than all the bill-board advertising in New York.

It was late when she began Jack's letter. It wasn't fun writing him, as it used to be. There were so many things now she couldn't write about. "Sacrifice," for instance. He was probably shocked by the censorship scandal.

Besides, there was that horrid, hateful woman, Mrs. Bulwer-Eaton.

A girl couldn't very well write a loving letter to an ex-sweetheart who sat under her very nose with a huge, red creature, old enough to be his ow nmother. Still there was that silver ring she had brought home from Florence. She had bought it for him, because she loved him. Because she wanted to give him something rare and beautiful. And because she had lost the little shining diamond that was his gift to her.

"Dearest," she began—no, that wouldn't do. . . . "Dear Jack" . . . Too casual. . . . "Dear Boy" . . . that sounded all right . . . not "Dearest Boy," but just "Dear Boy." Not too exclusive. But familiar. Loving, but not extravagant.

"I am sending you a silver ring. Lucrezia Borgia, they say, had one exactly like it. And she hid her poison powders in it. . . ."

Oh, dear no—that wouldn't do at all. Acting as if nothing had hap-pened.

"Dear Boy,

"I wonder who the charming lady was I saw you with at the the-ater. . . ."

Hypocrite! Hypocrite! Hypocrite! "Charming lady"—that odious crea-ture! Besides, he might think she was jealous.

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Better try once more. Tell him about little Rita, and the beautiful new apartment, and what fun it was having a baby in he house. She would just refer to the ring in a P. S. It would be better that way.

Anyone would think that a girl who could write plays, could write a letter easily enough. But it was dawn before Molly went to bed. Red's let-ter she put in a big stamped en-velope. There were eight sheets of yellow copy paper, hurriedly typed. Jack's letter was handwritten on her best stationery. There was a single sheet, and the writing did not quite fill it. Red's letter had taken 30 minutes to type. And Jack's three hours to compose.

When she had finished she was physically exhausted. Her head ached, and her throat. And there were pains in the backs of her knees. She was cold, too, although the night was warm.

When she was ready for bed, she slipped a dressing gown over her night dress, and tip-toed in the nursery. Rita lay on her back, with her cheek turned against the pillow, and both her little hands thrown up over her head.

It must have been because Molly was tired, that she buried her head in the blankets, and began to cry. She felt very sad, remembering that Ruth and Rita had died, and Jack had taken a dreadful fat woman to the theater.

Presently she was crying out loud. Then little Rita woke. With her baby fingers, she drew Molly's hands down from her face, and tried to kiss her tears away. And when Molly still wept, little Rita wept, too. Until Molly took the child in her arms, and carried her into the kitchen to sit on the table and watch, while she made cocoa for them both.

Before they were through their impromptu breakfast, the nurse woke. Then Molly went to bed. But before she had been asleep an hour, the telephone began to ring.

(To Be Continued)

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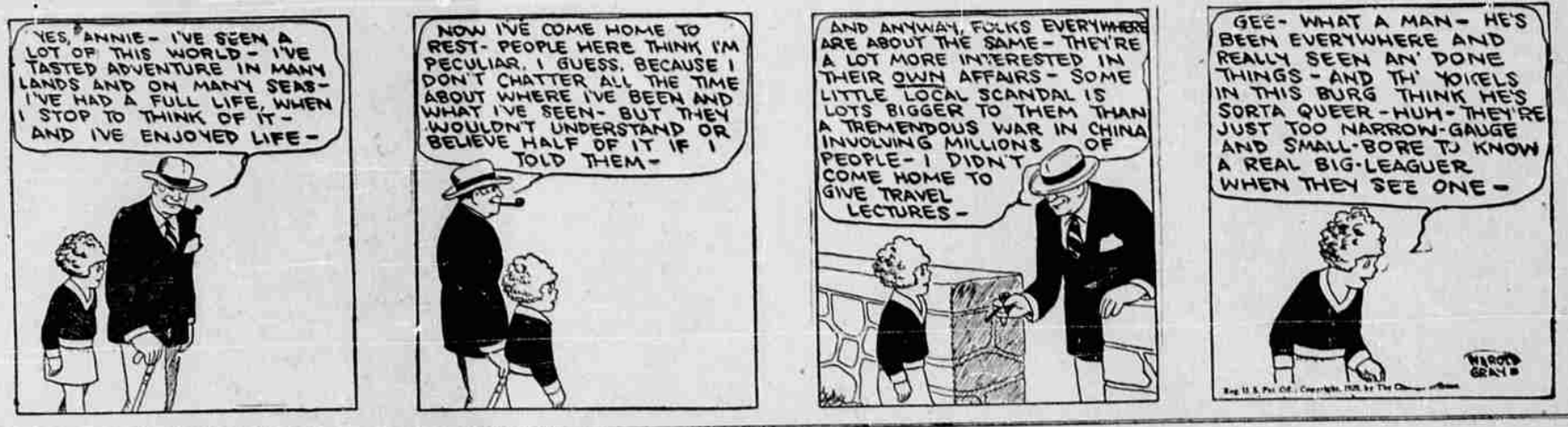
Philadelphia is hardly a suburb of New York, but 175 residents of the Quaker City commute to the metro-polis daily.

## LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE — What A Man — By HAROLD GRAY




## SALESMAN SAM — High, Up There! — By SMALL

## BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES — Fast Work — By MARTIN

## MOM'N POP — The Lost Is Found — By COWAN

## OUR BOARDING HOUSE — By AHERN

## THE TINYMITES — By KNICK

THE Tinies rode around the ring and Clowny said, "We're quite the thing. It's fun to be so popular. I like this quite a lot. But, gee, this crown upon my head is mighty heavy, just like lead. And all the clothes I'm wear-ing are so thick they make me hot."

"Don't kick," snapped Coppy. "What's the use? The boss will short-ly turn us loose. Then we can take off all these clothes and set out in the breeze. But, all be careful. I've been told that that's a fine way to catch cold. The sudden change affects you and you shortly start to sneeze."

But now ther'd finished with their ride and so the elephant trudged out-side the monstrous tent and snorted loud. This made the Tinies smile. "I guess," said Coppy, "he is bound that we must slip down to the ground. I think perhaps he's weary and desires to rest a while."

Just then the elephant, with ease, slipped forward, down upon his knees. This made it very easy for the Tinies to slide free. Then Clowny shouted, "Goodness knows I'm going to get out of these clothes." They all took off their kingly gowns and quick as quick could be.

The food tent gong then rang aloud and they all joined the circus crowd. A special night-time treat was served and everybody ate. The circus boss then said, "Come out beside this tent and gather 'bout. The Tinies have a big surprise in store and it is great."

So out they rushed to their sur-prise. The Tinies opened up their eyes at what they saw before them. "It's an auto," Scouty cried. And, sure enough it was. Brand new! The boss said, "This belongs to you. I thought you happy Tinymites would like to take a ride."

(Read the Story, Then Color the Picture)

The Tinymites leave the circus in the next story.

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