

# OUR COMIC SECTION

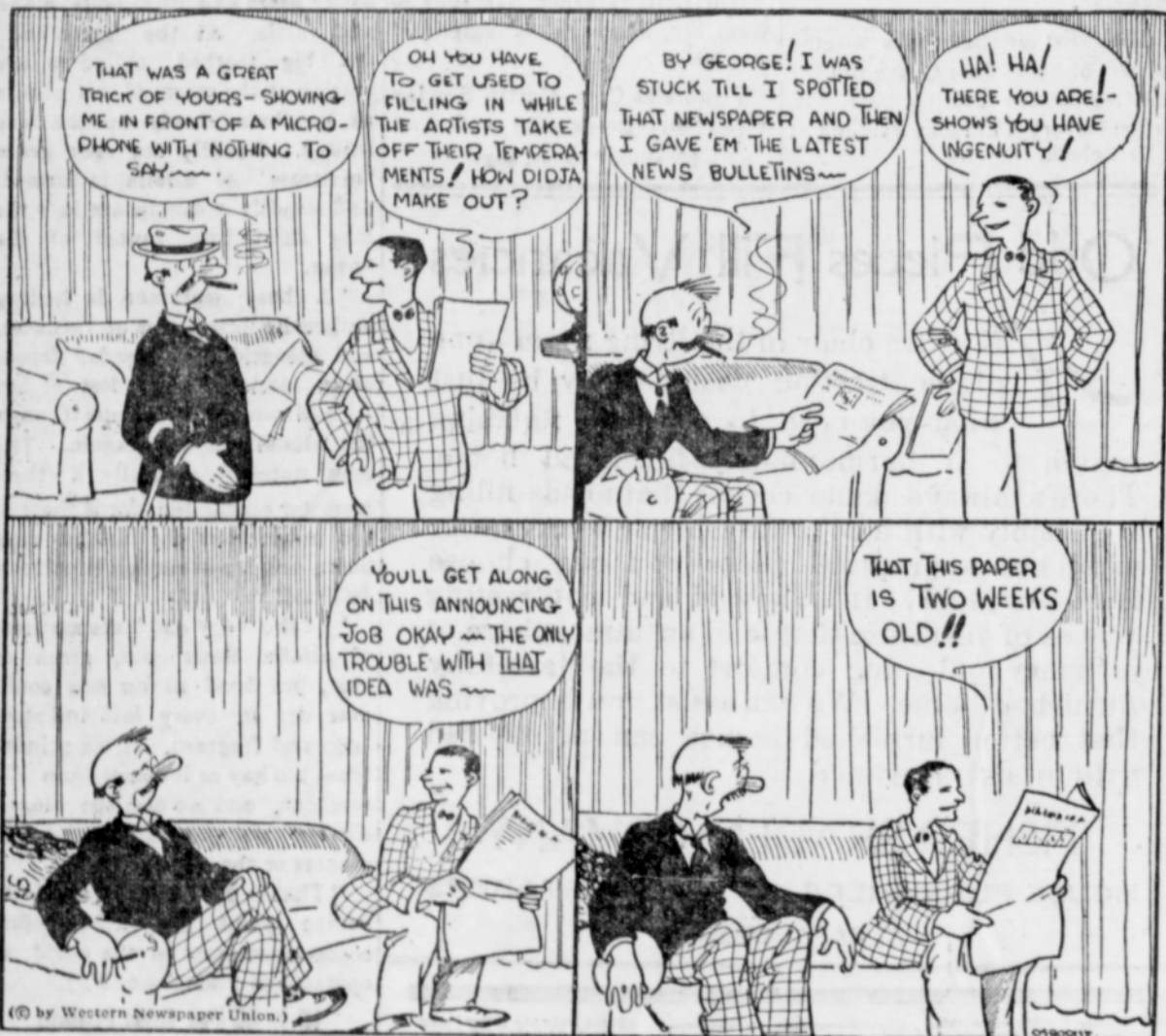
## Ether Waves



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## THE FEATHERHEADS

## Extemporaneous



## MICKIE, THE PRINTER'S DEVIL

## Dogs Hate Snakes



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## MELISSA AND HER EXPERIENCE

By ALICE E. IVES

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MISS MELISSA CRANE had lived alone in the red brick house in Locust street for over 15 years. Living alone sometimes makes one sweeter, mellow, and more tolerant of his fellow creatures; but that is when he has hitched his "wagon to a star," or gone on the beautiful quest of finding his soul, and that which naturally follows—the soul of all mankind.—Miss Melissa had not given much time, to either of these pursuits. If she had, this would be another story. She had been a decent, God-fearing woman, living strictly within the letter of the law. If she had ever had a love affair it was entirely unknown to anyone in Barrington. Still, a good deal might have happened before then, as Melissa Crane was all of thirty when she came there. Certain it was that something in her life very like a tragedy had been caused by a habit, and had made Miss Crane strong in her denunciation of evil things. She was a prominent officer in the W. C. T. U. and something of a factor in influencing the election which resulted in the nation going dry.

Old Hannah, who had gone faithfully for years, once a year, to "clean up" for Miss Crane, probably knew more about that lady's affairs than anyone else in Barrington. Oddly enough, Miss Crane was ever at times, confidential with her servitor, perhaps because she found she was like herself, close-mouthed.

When old Hannah was set to open up and clean a long disused bedroom, her curiosity got the better of her.

"Going to have company?" she ventured.

"No," answered Miss Crane. "It's a child." At the woman's astonished look she added: "I guess she must be more than twelve. I didn't think to ask. Oh, dear! I don't know how I'm ever going to stand it; but I'll get up to some good boarding school just as quick as I can."

"Have you adopted her?" still further ventured Hannah.

"Adopted her?" snorted Miss Crane, as though asked if she had committed burglary. "Not at all. She's the child of a good-for-nothing half-brother of mine. Her mother died about three years ago, and now he has been killed in an accident. Some one wrote to me about it. He hadn't left a penny, and they wanted to know what they could do with Ethel. Well, there didn't seem to be but one thing to do, and that was to send for her. I don't know any more about taking care of a child than—than nothing," sighed Miss Crane.

"Well, there," reassured Hannah, "I do; and if you want any help—if she gets croup or something you just send for me quick."

It was rather a pathetic little figure in black that landed at the door of the red brick house. When the appeal in the large brown eyes greeted Miss Crane she did something quite unexpected to herself; she put her arms around the child and kissed her. Miss Crane concluded she wasn't pretty, but she had "the makings" of good looks.

Ethel was not quite the unrepentant barbarian Miss Crane had expected, though she had her quota of faults, and committed some of the usual childish misdemeanors. But she succeeded in penetrating the rather hard crust of Melissa's heart to the extent of not being packed off to a boarding school, and was suffered to continue her education on the home ground.

It was a sore trial to the elder woman when the girl she had learned to love as her own seemed to care for the company of Irvin Banks. Ethel was now nineteen. She had been graduated from the high school, and had been studying at an art academy, and was once more back in Barrington. She was bright, capable, and with a character that was developing both kindness and force. The deep sense of obligation she had felt for her aunt had grown into love, and she was willing to make almost any sacrifice rather than bring sorrow into the life of the lonely woman. Miss Crane had legally adopted Ethel, and she bore her name.

It was something of a shock to the girl when her aunt made known to her the aversion she felt toward Irvin Banks, and her strong desire that she should not allow the acquaintance to go any further.

"But why, aunts?" she urged.

"What have you against him?"

"Don't you know what there is against him?" cried Miss Crane.

"Well—what?"

"Why, that boy took to carousing when he wasn't more than eighteen. He got in with a bad set, and helped rob a store over in Redcliffe, and got sent up for a year."

"Yes, I know about that," said Ethel quietly.

Her aunt regarded her with speechless amazement. When she finally found her breath to speak, she said: "You knew that? And yet you ask me what there is against him?"

"Yes, I knew it—he told me. But that was seven years ago. He has never caroused since. It was a terrible lesson. They got him in such condition that night he scarcely knew what he was doing. He watched outside, but he never entered the store. It was all right he should be punished. He feels that way, and says he is glad

he was pulled up in time. You know what he has made of himself, the people all know, and most of them overlook what happened when he was nothing but a boy."

"Well," protested Miss Crane. "I must say I can't. I wouldn't lay a straw in his way. I'd help him any way I could, but when it comes to—"

She paused here as though positively unable to contemplate the awful possibility of anything like familiarity with such a person.

"But just think!" cried the girl. "They have given him the position of first assistant among all the engineers in building the big bridge! Just imagine what they think of him in New York when they do that!"

"Yes, that's fine. I want to see him get along. But I don't want to see you get to caring enough for him to— to spoil your life."

"Spoil my life?" echoed the girl.

"Yes, you can never tell when a man that's had a bad habit once will take 'to it again. You can't trust him. I'd rather die than see anyone I cared for marry that sort of man."

Ethel's affection for her aunt, and her love for this man—for she knew now it was love—were so nearly crushing her in the warfare that she could say no more, and she brought the interview to an end by making an excuse to go to her room.

Irvin Banks lived with his sister, who had been one of the principal factors in helping him to rise to the position he now held. It was with his sister that Ethel had first met him. She was attracted by the good-looking young man with the high, firm carriage of the head, the straight gaze and the wholesome smile, and she was further held by his ability to say something worth while, and saying it rather well. She had met him in his own home by invitation of his sister, and had asked him to call. It was after his second visit, at both of which Miss Crane had pretended illness as an excuse for not appearing, that the lady had given her emphatic reasons for not wishing him to call again.

Ground between the millstones of her "divided duty," Ethel sought the counsel of Mary Banks.

"Aunt Melissa has been to me a second mother. I love her very dearly. How can I go dead against her wishes. I—I must ask him not to call again," Ethel said.

"And do you think Irvin will let it go at that?" cried his sister. "Maybe you don't know what this means to him."

Ethel's heart gave a big throb. She knew what it meant to her. In the meeting of their eyes, the sister knew.

"Will you ask your aunt to come and see me?" she said.

"Oh, she never would," asserted Ethel.

"Not if she could help it, of course," rejoined Mary. "But you've got to put your foot down, and be firm. Just say you can't tell him not to call, and you'd be likely to see him in other places anyway. If she wants to shut off all communication between you and Mr. Irvin Banks, the only way is to come and lay the case before his sister."

Ethel looked dubious, but promised to be firm, and the two conspirators parted.

Miss Crane stoutly protested she would do nothing of the kind, but as relations remained decidedly strained, she concluded it was the only way to conclude peace.

The day she had appointed to call on Miss Banks was cold and blustering, and snow began to fall heavily while she was on the way. She had to walk nearly a mile, and she arrived at the Banks cottage, chilled, wet and bedraggled. Mary Banks met her with such cheery cordiality, and took off her wet wraps to dry her feet, and talking pleasantly all the time that her caller found it difficult to make an opening for her errand. At last she got up courage to begin.

"Miss Banks, I am—"

"Just a minute, Miss Crane! Let me get you something warm!"

Miss Crane protested she did not need anything, but suddenly Miss Banks regarded her with deep alarm.

"Oh!" she cried, "how badly you look! Why, you are having a chill! There is so much pneumonia about! I shall get you something at once."

Miss Crane admitted she was still cold, and allowed her to have her way.

"It's just a little hot lemonade," she said, handing the tall tumbler to her guest.

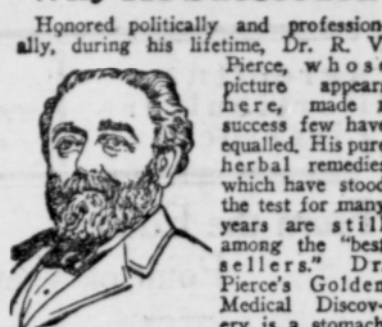
Miss Crane, already alarmed about her condition, took a long draft of the mixture. Suddenly she set it down with a frightened look at the other woman. "There's something in it!" she cried.

"Oh, only the least bit. If you had a doctor here he'd make you take it. You'll have pneumonia if you don't!"

Miss Crane now thoroughly frightened, swallowed the whole of it. It was really a very liberal allowance of a stimulant and not being used to such things, she was soon conversing glibly, and feeling very much at home with her hostess. Mary showed her brother's picture, and regaled her with his wonderful achievements. Miss Crane quite forgot what she had come for, and invited them both to call. Mary telephoned for a conveyance, and sent her guest home happy.

Ethel received the unexpected news with astonishment, but the next instant became aware that Miss Crane had been having too much. The next day a very miserable, repentant woman met her at breakfast. "I've got to resign from W. C. T. U.," she said. "I'll never be able to look any of them in the face again. I guess I needn't have been quite so hard on Irvin Banks. I haven't anything more to say against his coming."

## Why He Succeeded



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