

PARADE

by Evelyn Campbell

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WNU Service

CHAPTER XIV—Continued

He did not know why he was there, except that his body, no longer subjugated by mind, brought him, without volition, into a poor tragic comedy of the dreadful night.

People had been killed. Robes and blankets, brought from somewhere, covered the still things with a spurious decency. Ambulances were coming; their distant clamor, dulled by the heaviness of the air, beat upon the shrinking silence.

A poor creature, once woman, gasped at Brian's elbow: "Three of 'em dead—three! Something ought to be done about it. Three of 'em—just like that!" She snapped her fingers.

He saw that there were three women beneath a blanket on the ground. Their feet, in high heeled slippers, protruded from the shallow covering; the edges of their dresses showed and their thin stockings, drawn over slender, terrible limbs.

The black bulk of the patrol wagon told about them. And then he saw, close to his feet, a larger mound, that must have been a man.

"He was runnin' a poor girl in," stammered a voice. "Served him right, too, but he let her in for it same as himself—"

A helmet advanced upon them. "None o' that, now, or up you go. Clear out, you—an' you!" Monotonous with the duty of a hundred such nights.

The woman's voice faded whining away. "Three o' 'em . . . all at once!" As if that were a matter of mourning.

Then Brian heard another sound—too faint to be a sigh, but breathed against his ear, like the echo of a lost summer. He turned his face and saw her standing where she had been all this time, close beside him, so that he could have touched her if he had known.

"Linda," he said, and she put out her hand to him like a lost child, as he had known she would do.

They took the few steps to the pavement side by side, as if they belonged to one another and had come there together. The line of questioners closed in behind them.

It was a dark street of closed shop windows and little businesses where women did not belong. A wide-open poolroom was flooded with yellow light. A fruit stand, open to the world, offered public shelter. They walked on a little way, wordlessly.

Then all at once there was a door opened to them. A broad, white-coated arm drew them, without contact, into the warm fragrance of a narrow place where one must walk in single file or be enwrapped in the steamy vapors of huge coffee urns and frank griddles.

"There'll be a little corner back beyond," explained Coffee John, signaling over his shoulder with a massive curled thumb.

They went as he told them.

Coffee John had been there so many years that no one remembered when he came. His shop was large enough to turn a window and a door to the world and deep enough to shelter his philosophy. From his narrow counter he had fed the great ones of the city and offered the cup of charity to the lost children of God. He had not moved from this place, so that he had grown wide and heavy and his face was livid with the moisture of his sustenance. But he had seen the world go by and he knew of all its faces, even the false ones, and what was hidden behind the paper mache. His broad back, turned upon Brian and Linda, shut them into a narrow crevice of their own and stranded them upon a shallow wooden bench, wedged behind a little table spread with pale, slipping oilcloth and pewter spoons.

But he was there and she was there and that was enough.

"Why didn't you tell me, Linda, Linda! What do you know of love if you could throw it away for such a little reason?" he said.

She dropped in her corner, fragile and bending from the outrift of the storm. Her face was a small white triangle against the blackness of her furs. Somehow he got hold of her hands and held them, warming them until the thread of life came back.

"Tell me, Linda."

And she told him; meaningless things that were freighted with the tragedy of the world; dark, noisome things like paths through a fever swamp. She told of her shame that was weakness and her pride that was without honor. She abused herself with words so cruel that he was abused with her, and in the narrow cell they clung together like wind-driven moths, not enduring the blue white light. But through it all he believed in her and warmed her hands and through her hands to her heart.

"I could not let you be hurt through me, Brian."

She wanted to go, in spite of his arms. She struggled to be free, knowing that freedom meant the end of all things for her.

"You could not leave me—you never will, my sweet, my sweet! There is nothing else but you. There is no other life than ours! Listen, Linda, we will find our own. It will be small and fine and sweet, and it will belong to just ourselves. There will be no grandeur and there will be no lies. Those little houses in the snow that night—don't you remember?"

A reporter finished his coffee in the lighted front shop and slammed down the cup.

"Not much news in a smashup like that," he complained. "No news after all the boys got it. A cop an' a couple of frails. Huh. Did you see it off, John?"

Coffee John nodded, polishing a cup. "Yas. I was lookin'. He was a fine man, though—O'Hara."

"Would have been. He'd have made the grade or been down at the bottom for keeps. Wooden sort of a guy, wasn't he?"

"Yas. Like wood. Hard."

The door slammed. The reporter's face, buried sourly in his turned-up collar, showed pale for a moment at



"I Could Not Let You Be Hurt Through Me, Brian."

the window. He glanced sardonically at the broad man in his narrow groove and vanished.

Coffee John finished glossing the cup. It shone like old ivory. Then he glanced at the dark shallow wall behind the partition. The two figures blurred.

He handed the cup lovingly, yet with delicacy; filled it with a stream of dark golden liquid, touched it with yellow cream from a private bottle and laid three little cubes of sugar upon the thick saucer edge. One could have been no better served.

With a light step he went back to them and put the cup before her.

"A lady might need war-r-min' up on such a night," he said in a distant, rumbling voice and returned to his place.

She was spent and exhausted. She had said all that she could say and he had listened to nothing at all. Her hand, moving, touched the handle of the thick cup, wavering, but with a sudden poignant longing for life, she lifted it and drank.

The door opened from the night. A voice whined inquiries. Coffee John came again.

"Your taxi's a-waitin' out front, sir. He's gettin' him a bite o' lunch."

They lifted new faces.

"The taxi! By George! Tell him we're coming!" cried Brian.

[THE END.]

Language Changes Made Over "Precise" Protests

Until about the middle of the Nineteenth century it was usual in pronouncing the word humble to refrain from sounding the h. Generally the word was preceded by an instead of by a. The changing to sounding the h came gradually as a matter of usage, as many changes in language come. In the end usage must be followed, though precise speakers resist it for a time. Even in fairly recent years a few persons persisted in pronouncing humble without the h. The variation you have observed on this point between an early and a later edition of Webster's dictionary is accounted for by acceptance of the change by the later editors. The gradual alteration in usage concerning the word humble was a subject of protest as long ago as 1853, when a correspondent of the periodical "Notes and Queries" illustrated his contention that the h should be silent by giving a list of what he stated to be the derivations of words in which the h should be silent. The words were heir, honest, honor, hour, humble and humor.

Bomb-Proof Auto

The most costly and luxurious automobile ever brought to China was built in the United States for the president of the Nanking government. The whole of the metal work on the body of the limousine, and even the hood, is of half-inch thick navy steel plate, which is designed to shed the bullets or bombs of would-be assassins. Two extra seats project from the back of the car, built high enough to permit the occupants to see forward over the hood. These will be occupied by special guards with machine guns. The running boards are unusually long, for guards to stand, each with a revolver in hand.

Many Uses for Carbon

Pure carbon is widely used in decolorizing, clarification, and purification of foods, edible oils and fats.

Adrift With Humor

GOOD-BY

This particular cabin was even a more than usually dilapidated specimen of its class, and the chimney, consisting mainly of the remains of an old top hat, presented a comical appearance. One of the tourists accented a youth who was sitting contentedly on a fence.

"I say, my boy," he said, "does that chimney draw well?"

"Sure thin, it does," was the boy's prompt reply; "it draws the notice o' ivory phoo! that passes by!"

WHY PARROT SWEARS



"Why does your parrot swear so terribly?"

"We can't help it, my dear—the golf course lies right in front of the house."

Up for Dinner

Said the chamber maid to the sleeping guest.

"Get up you lazy sinner. We need the sheet for a tablecloth. There's company for dinner."

Profitable Trading

Sambo borrowed a pair of rubber boots from Mose. Time passed and the boots were not returned. They met.

Said Mose—Sambo, when is you-all gwine gimme back dem boots ob mine?"

"Ah ain't got yob-all's boots, Mose," said Sambo. "Ah dun traded dem fob a pair ob mah own."—Recorder.

Some One Shuffled the Deck

Mr. Justwed—For heaven's sake! What do you call this dish you've made?"

His Wife—I haven't the faintest idea. I made it from a recipe in my loose-leaf cookbook and I'm afraid the leaves are not all in place.

A Helpful Suggestion

The Walter—How'd you like a slice of nice hickory-cured country ham with three or four fresh eggs, right off the nest?"

The Customer—Fine! Just the thing!

The Walter—Ain't it so? Too bad, we ain't got none.

WHY HE WAS GOOD



"Her husband is awfully good to her, dear."

"Yes, so I've heard—he's only half her size."

Sir-ilarity

This world is a tumultuous scene and our attentive care it claims to tell the difference between Elections, fights and football games.

A Slowness Explained

"You English are slow to see a joke," said the forward young woman.

"Perhaps," answered the Londoner. "But, you see, real jokes are so scarce in our country that one has to take a little time to inspect any article that's offered."—Washington Star.

Excuse It, Please!

"How would you classify a telephone girl? Is hers a business or a profession?"

"Neither. It's a calling."

Lost Is Right

Mistress (interviewing cook)—Supposing I wanted you to cook an elaborate dinner for about 15 people—would you be lost?

Cook—That's just 'ow the last folks lost me.—Humorist.

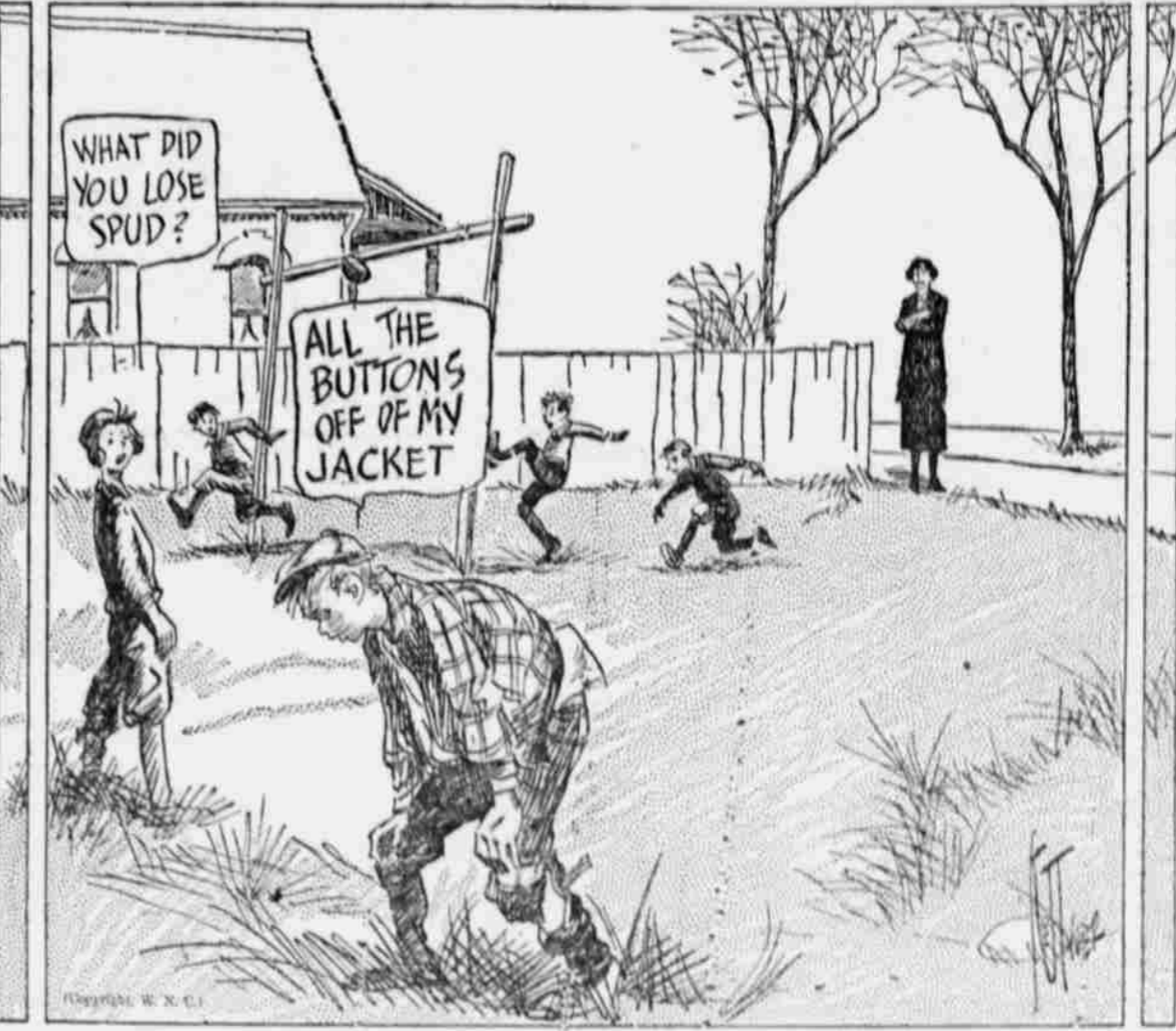
She Soon Showed Him

He—When I married you I thought you were an angel.

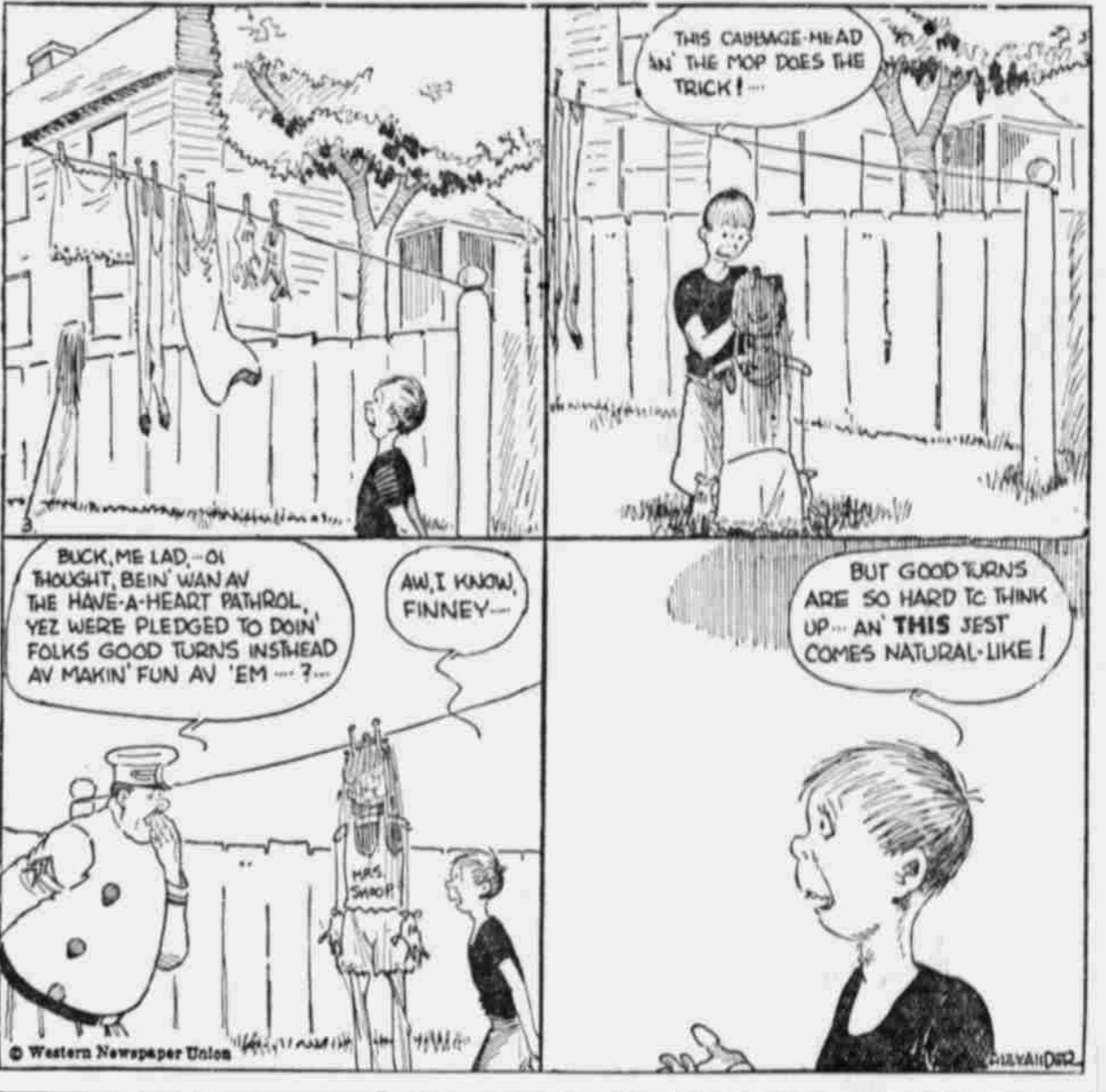
She—I imagine you did. You seemed to think I didn't need any clothes or hats.

OUR COMIC SECTION

Events in the Lives of Little Men



FINNEY OF THE FORCE



THE FEATHERHEADS

