

LI'L ABNER *The Loan Arranger—* by **AL CAPP**



Our Story: TO PRINCE VALIANT'S GREAT SURPRISE SIR GAWAIN REFUSES A JOUST WITH THE FOUR GUARDIAN KNIGHTS. "WE COME IN PEACE, NO TRUE KNIGHT WOULD DEPRIVE SO FAIR A LADY OF HER ESCORT."

"THINK US NOT CRAVEN, FAIR MAID; WE DO BUT SPARE THE KNIGHTS WHOSE DUTY IT IS TO GUARD SO PRECIOUS A TREASURE AS YOURSELF. WE HUMBLY OFFER OUR SERVICES TO SEE YOU SAFELY TO WHATEVER FAIRLAND YOU ADORN."

"TRUE IT IS THAT WE HAVE SURVIVED THE PAST FEW DAYS ON THE DIET YOU PROVIDED— FISH AND RABBITS, RABBITS AND FISH!" ADMITS GAWAIN CONDESCENDINGLY. "BUT IT IS DUE TO MY FORBEARANCE IN THE FACE OF A CHALLENGE, MY WIDE EXPERIENCE WITH THE OTHER SEX, AND MY ASTOUNDING CLEVERNESS, THAT WE WILL NOW LIVE FOR A WHILE IN LUXURY."

SO THE TWO FAMOUS ROUND TABLE KNIGHTS BECAME HONORED GUESTS OF THE COUNTESS OF RATHFORD, AND SIR GAWAIN PERFORMS AS GALLANTLY WITH KNIFE AND GOBLET AS EVER HE DID WITH SHIELD AND SPEAR.

NEXT DAY, WHEN GAWAIN HAS RECOVERED SUFFICIENTLY FROM HIS FEATS OF ENDURANCE AT THE BANQUET TABLE, HE CHALLENGES THE FOUR KNIGHTS AND GIVES EACH A TUMBLE. "JUST SO THEY WILL NOT HARBOR ANY FALSE IMPRESSIONS," HE EXPLAINS.

VAL WATCHES AS A LIKELY TALL LAD AND A SLENDER MAID PRACTICE AT ARCHERY. THIS MOMENT OF LOVE AND LAUGHTER IN THE SUNLIGHT IS THE LAST MOMENT OF HAPPINESS THEY WILL KNOW FOR MANY A DAY.

NEXT WEEK—The Marriage Contract.