FLOWER OF THE NORTH

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

(Copyright, 1919)

THE STORY THUS FAR

Philip Whittemore, courageous fighter, cutting his eye-teeth as a business man, possesses a "big thing" in the Far North, finds himself opposed by an enemy he doesn't understand and sends for Gregson, an artist, to help him out. Whittemore's father was ruined by the meat trust. Philip aims to avenge his father and, incidentally, to help the populace to cheap food by flooding the market with fish. That is his "big thing"—fish in many lakes controlled by his company under a provisional license from the Canadian Government. He learns too late that his partner, Brokaw, has sold stock on the strength of his letters, and the company has made a million dollars by doing the very thing he was fighting—the robbing of the people by selling them stock on which the promoters never expect any return. He has difficulty in persuading Brokaw to have the company turn some of the profits into a fund for development, but succeeds at last. Then it is that some unknown enemy begins destroying the company property and taking even viler means to ruin the concern.

CHAPTER IV

PHILIP broke the silence.

"Now—you understand."

"It is impossible!" gasped Gregson. "I cannot believe this! It—it might have happened a thousand—two thousand years ago—but not now. My God, man!" he cried, more excitedly. "You do not mean to tell me that you believe this will be done?"

"Yes," replied Philip.

"It is impossible!" exclaimed Gregson again, crushing the letter in his hand. "A man doesn't live—a combination doesn't exist—that would start such a hell loose as this—in this way!"

Philip smiled grimly.

"The man does live, and the combination does exist," he said slowly. "Greggy, I have known of men and of combinations who have spent millions, who have sacrificed everything of honor and truth, who have driven thousands of men, women and children to starvation—and worse—to achieve a victory in high finance. I have known of men and combinations who have broken almost every law of man and God in the fight for money and power. And so have you! You have associated with some of these men. You have laughed and talked with them, smoked with them, and have dined at their tables. You spent a week at Selden's summer home, and it was Selden who cornered wheat three years ago and raised the price of bread two cents a loaf. It was Selden who brought about the bread riots in New York, Chicago and a score of other cities, who swung wide the prison doors for thousands, whose millions were gained at a cost of misery, crime and even death. And Selden is only one out of thousands who live today, watching for their opportunities, giving no heed to those who may fall under the juggernaut of their capital. This isn't the age of petty discrimination, Greggy. It's the age of the almighty dollar, and of the fight for it. And there's no chivalry, no quarter shown in this fight. Men of Selden's stamp don't stop at women and children. The scrubwoman's dollar is just as big as yours or mine and if a scheme could be promoted whereby every scrubwoman in America could be safely robbed of a dollar you'd find thousands of men down there in our cities ready to go into it tomorrow. And to such men as these what is the sacrifice of a few women up here?"

Gregson dropped the letter, crumpled and twisted, upon the table.

"I wonder—if I understand," he said, looking into Philip's white face.

"There has undoubtedly been previous correspondence, and this letter contains the final word. It shows that your enemies have already succeeded in working up the forest people against you, and have filled them with suspicion. Their last blow is to be——"

He stopped, and Philip nodded at the horrified question in his eyes.

"Greggy, up here there is one law which reigns above all other law. When I was in Prince Albert a year ago I was sitting on the veranda of the little old Windsor Hotel. About me were a dozen wild men of the north, who had come down for a day or two to the edge of civilization. Most of those men had not been out of the forests for a year. Two of them were from the Barrens, and this was their first glimpse of civilized life in five years. As we sat there a woman came up the street. She turned in at the hotel. About me there was a sudden lowering of voices, a shuffling of feet. As she passed, every one of those twelve rose from their seats and stood with bowed heads and their caps in their hands until she had gone. I was the only one who remained sitting! That, Greggy, is the one great law of life up here, the worship of woman because she is woman. A man may steal, he may kill, but he must not break this law. If he steals or kills, the mounted police may bring the offender to justice; but if he breaks this other law there is but one punishment, and that is the punishment of the people. That is what this letter purposes to do—to break this law in order that its penalty may fall upon us. And if they succeed, God help us!"

It was Gregson who jumped to his feet now. He took half a dozen nervous steps, paused, lighted a cigarette, and looked down into Philip's upturned face.

"I understand now where the fight is coming in," he said. "If this thing goes through, these people will rise and wipe you off the map. They'll lay it to you and your men, of course. And I fancy it won't be a job half done if they feel about it as I'd feel. But," he demanded, sharply, "why don't you put the affair into the hands of the proper authorities—the police or the Government? You've got—By George, you must have the name of the man to whom that letter was addressed!"

Philip handed him a soiled white envelope, of the kind in which official documents are usually mailed.

"That's the man."

Gregson gave a low whistle.

"Lord—Fitzhugh—Lee!" he read, slowly, as though scarce believing his eyes. "Great Scott! A British peer!"

The cynical smile on Philip's lips cut his words short.

"Perhaps," he said. "But if there is a British lord up here he isn't very well known, Greggy. No one knows of him. No one has heard a rumor of him. That is why we can't go to the police or the Government. They'd give small credence to what we've got to show. This letter wouldn't count the weight of a feather without further evidence, and a lot of it. Besides, we haven't time to go to the Government. It is too far away and too slow. And as for the police—I know of three in this territory, and there are 15,000 square miles of mountains and plains and forest in their 'beat.' It's up to you and me to find this Lord Fitzhugh. If we can do that we will be in a position to put a kibosh on this plot in a hurry. If we fail to run him down——"

"What then?"

"We'll have to watch our chances. I've told you all that I know and you're on an even working basis with me. At first I thought that I understood the object of those who are planning to ruin us in this cowardly manner. But I don't now. If they ruin us they also destroy the chances of any other company that may be scheming to usurp our place. For that reason I——"

"There must still be other factors in the game," said Gregson, as Philip hesitated.

"There are. I want you to work out your own suspicions, Greggy, and then we'll compare notes. Lord Fitzhugh is the key to the whole situation. No matter who is at the bottom of this plot, Lord Fitzhugh is the man at the working end of it. We don't care so much about the writer of this letter as the one to whom it was written. It is evident that he had planned to be at Churchill, for the letter is addressed to him here. But he hasn't shown up yet. He has never been here, so far as I can discover."

"I'd give a year's growth for a copy of the British Peerage or a Who's Who," mused Gregson, flecking the ashes from his cigarette. "Who the deuce can this Lord Fitzhugh be? What sort of an Englishman would mix up in a dirty job of this kind? You might imagine him to be one of the men behind the guns, like Brokaw. But, by George, he's working the dirty end of it himself, according to that letter!"

"You're beginning to use your head already, Greggy," said Philip, a little more cheerfully. "I've asked myself that question a hundred times during the last three days, and I'm more at sea than ever. If it had been plain Tom Brown or Bill Jones, the name would not have suggested anything beyond what you have read in the letter. That's the question: Why should a Lord Fitzhugh Lee be mixed up in this affair?"

The two men looked at each other keenly for a few moments in silence.

"It suggests——" began Gregson.

"What?"

"That there may be a bigger scheme behind this affair than we imagine. In fact, it suggests to me that the Northerners are being stirred up against you and your men for some other and more powerful reason than to make you get out of the country and compel the Government to withdraw your license. So help me God, I believe there's more behind it!"

"So do I," said Philip, quietly.

"Have you any suspicions of what might be the more powerful motive?"

"None. I know that British capital is heavily interested in mineral lands east of the surveyed line. But there is none at Churchill. All operations have been carried on from Montreal and Toronto."

"Have you written to Brokaw about this letter?"

"You are the first to whom I have revealed its contents," said Philip. "I have neglected to tell you that Brokaw is so worked up over the affair that he is joining me in the north. The Hudson Bay Company's ship, which comes over twice a year, touches at Halifax, and if Brokaw followed out his intentions he took passage there. The ship should be in within a week or ten days. And, by the way"—Philip stood up and thrust his hands deep in his pockets as he spoke, half smiling at Gregson—"it gives me pleasure to hand you a bit of cheerful information along with that," he added. "Miss Brokaw is coming with him. She is very beautiful."

Gregson held a lighted match until it burnt his finger-tips.

"The deuce you say! I've heard—"

"Yes, you have heard of her beauty, no doubt. I am not a special enthusiast in your line, Greggy, but I will confirm your opinion of Miss Brokaw. You will say that she is the most beautiful girl you have ever seen, and you will want to make heads of her for Burke's. I suppose you wonder why she is coming up here? So do I."

There was a look of perplexity in Philip's eyes which Gregson might have noticed if he had not gone to the door to look out into the night.

"What makes the stars so big and bright up in this country, Phil?" he asked.

"Because of the clearness of the atmosphere through which you are looking," replied Philip, wondering what was passing through the other's mind. "This air—compared with ours—is just like a piece of glass that has been cleaned of a year's accumulation of dirt."

Gregson whistled softly for a few moments. Then he said, without turning:

"She's got to go some if she beats the girl I saw this evening, Phil." He turned at Philip's silence, and laughed. "I beg your pardon, old man, I didn't mean to speak of her as if she were a horse. I mean Miss Brokaw."

"And I don't particularly like the idea of betting on the merits of a pretty girl," replied Philip, "but I'll break the rule for once and wager you the best hat in New York that she does beat her."

"Done!" said Gregson. "A little gentle excitement of this sort will relieve the tension of the other thing, Phil. I've heard enough of business for tonight. I'm going to finish a sketch that I have begun of her before I forget the fine points. Any objection?"

"None at all," said Philip. "Meanwhile I'll go out to breathe a spell."

He put on his coat and took down his cap from a peg in the wall. Gregson had seated himself under the lamp and was sharpening a pencil. As Philip went to go out Gregson drew an envelope from his pocket and tossed it on the table.

"If you should happen to see any one that looks like—her," he said, nodding toward the envelope, "kindly put in a word for me, will you? I did that in a hurry. It's not half flattering."

Philip laughed as he picked up the envelope.

"The most beau—" he began.

He caught himself with a jerk. Gregson, looking up from his pencil-sharpening, saw the smile leave his lips and a quick flush leap into his bronzed cheeks. He stared at the face on the envelope for half a minute, then gazed speechlessly at Gregson.

It was Gregson who laughed, softly and without suspicion.

"How does your wager look now?" he taunted.

"She — is — beautiful," murmured Philip, dropping the envelope and turning to the door. "Don't wait for me, Greggy. Go to bed."

He heard Gregson laugh behind him, and he wondered, as he went out, what Gregson would say if he told him that he had drawn on the back of the old envelope the beautiful face of Eileen Brokaw!

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

Gregson saw the smile leave his lips and a quick flush leap into his bronzed cheeks

THE DAILY NOVELETTE

THE MEETING

By Julia A. Robinson

HER soldier boy was coming home and Nita dreaded the meeting. Of course, she would have to see him and he would find out her deception. What would he think of her? How could she bear that he should look at her?

It had all begun at the girls' Red Cross meeting. "Let's pin our names and addresses on the inside of these socks we are knitting," suggested May Bond. "Perhaps the soldiers who get them will write to us."

Each girl as she finished a pair of socks pinned her name on the inside and they were sent out. After a time letters began to arrive from the boys at the front, telling of war experiences and of army life. The girls read them aloud with many comments and much interest. Some were from French soldiers and were written in broken English, hard to make out. Some were entirely in French; then the girls summoned all their knowledge of the language and tried to puzzle them out, even bringing out the big French dictionary and poring over it. Some letters were from our own American boys "over there." One girl had a letter from her own brother, for her socks had fallen to him.

"Glad to find you're such a good knitter," he wrote. "Your socks are the best yet."

Nita, in a spirit of fun, had pretended in her letter that she was somebody's maiden aunt, and wrote in a motherly strain. She had hardly expected her soldier to write more than once, but he did. Her letters were filled with good advice and suggestions for his health and comfort, and he seemed to like them. She even sent recipes for some old-fashioned remedies in case he should need them. Not once in her letters did she forget herself and tell of the fun she was having with the girls, of her studies and outdoor sports. Once she told him that the girls were trying to knit and sew, but she didn't suppose they would accomplish much; girls were so flighty.

Now the war was over and the boys were coming home. Nita's soldier had written that he should be among the first to return. He was longing to see her, to tell her how much good her letters, her advice and her wise counsel had done him. He knew she had a kind, motherly heart and sympathetic eyes—were they blue?—a dear mouth that smiled and helpful hands. He had so much enjoyed the socks and sweaters she had sent. They were just what his mother would have sent him had she been living. He was really longing to see her. Was her hair done in white puffs over her forehead? He loved to think of it so. He lived in Norton, not very many miles from her own home, and he should come to see her often. He hoped she would still be glad to "mother him" and to admonish him if he needed it.

Nita was frightened when she read that letter. She could not escape meeting him, for he had her address. What would he think of her? If she could only run away and hide! And yet she did want to see him. She had learned to like her soldier boy. She had pictured him in her mind, and she wanted—oh, how much she wanted—to see him, if only she could herself be invisible. She almost wished now that she had not played her foolish joke. He would despise her for her deceit and think her very silly.

With a beating heart Nita watched the returning regiment march through the streets. Which one was her soldier boy? He was with them, she knew. They were so straight, with strong, brave faces, and the happy light of victory in their eyes. She was proud of them all and cheered with the rest.

When the doorbell rang Nita stepped lightly to answer it, quite unsuspecting. She had not thought that he would come to see her so soon. There were others to greet him. Yet there he stood. She knew him at the first glance and wanted to hide. What could she say? How explain? She stared and said nothing.

He put out his hand with a boyish smile and a twinkle in his eye. "Is this Miss Spence?" he asked.

"I'm—I'm—Nita Spence," came the timid answer. Perhaps he would think the one who wrote the letters was her aunt. If he would only go away.

"My maiden aunt, my mentor," he laughed merrily. "You look just as I imagined you would."

She gasped. "But—why—how could you——"

"Don't you suppose I saw through your little game?" His smile was bright and assuming. "Do you think any maiden aunt could write such letters as you have been writing to me? I've had your image before me all the time, and I've learned to worship it. I knew your eyes were full of laughter, that your hair was soft and fluffy, that your lips smiled with the tiniest dimples. I could just see the mischief lurking in the corner of your eye as you wrote those letters. Oh, how you've helped to cheer those long, toilsome months. How the thought of you has given me help and courage, for I knew you were a brave girl, doing your part at home."

They were sitting very close together in the cozy sitting room. Nita's heart throbbed, and yet she tried to draw her hand away from him.

"Oh," she faltered, "what must you think of me?"

"I think you are the dearest girl in all the world," he told her, drawing her hands from her burning face. "I need mothering and advice, and all that sort of thing now, more than ever before. I've come to ask you to take the job for life—will you do it?"

He was gazing at her with earnest eyes, full of love.

She looked up at him, trembling, yet with mischief in her eyes as she answered, "Yes, if you think you can stand a maiden aunt's scolding." And he was quite satisfied.

The next complete novelette—Enid's Poster.

Tarzan and the Jewels of Opar

By EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS

CHAPTER XV—(Continued)

A LOW growl of warning rumbled from his throat; but Tarzan, guessing that the beast had but just quitted his kill and was well filled, merely made a slight detour and continued to the river, where he stopped a few yards above the tawny cat, and dropping upon his hands and knees, plunged his face into the cool waters. For a moment the lion continued to eye the man; then he resumed his drinking and man and beast quenched their thirst side by side, each apparently oblivious of the other's presence.

Numa was the first to finish. Raising his head, he gazed across the river for a few minutes with that stony fixity of attention which is a characteristic of his kind. But for the ruffling of his black mane to the touch of the passing breeze, he might have been wrought from golden bronze, so motionless, so statuesque his pose.

A deep sigh from the cavernous lungs dispelled the illusion. The mighty head swung slowly around until the yellow eyes rested upon the man. The bristled lip curved upward, exposing yellowed fangs. Another warning growl vibrated the heavy jowls, and the king of beasts turned majestically about and paced slowly up the trail into the dense reeds.

Tarzan of the Apes drank on, but from the corners of his gray eyes he watched the great brute's every move until he had disappeared from view, and after, his keen ears marked the movements of the carnivore.

A plunge in the river was followed by a scanty breakfast of eggs which chance discovered to him, and then he set off up-river toward the ruins of the bungalow where the golden ingots had marked the center of yesterday's battle.

And when he came upon the spot, great was his surprise and consternation. for the yellow metal had disappeared. The earth, trampled by the feet of horses and men, gave no clue. It was as though the ingots had evaporated into thin air.

The ape-man was at a loss to know where to turn or what next to do. There was no sign of any spoor which might denote that the she had been here. The metal was gone, and if there was any connection between the she and the metal, it seemed useless to wait for her now that the latter had been removed elsewhere.

Everything seemed to elude him—the pretty pebbles, the yellow metal, the she, his memory. Tarzan was disgusted. He would go back into the jungle and look for Chulk, and so he turned his steps once more toward the forest. He moved rapidly, swinging across the plain in a long, easy trot, and at the edge of the forest taking to the trees with the agility and speed of a small monkey.

His direction was aimless—he merely raced on and on through the jungle, the joy of unfettered action his principal urge, with the hope of stumbling upon some clue to Chulk or the she a secondary incentive.

For two days he roamed about, killing, eating, drinking and sleeping wherever inclination and the means to indulge it occurred simultaneously. It was upon the morning of the third day that the scent spoor of horse and man were wafted faintly to his nostrils.

Instantly he altered his course to glide silently through the branches in the direction from which the scent came.

It was not long before he came upon a solitary horseman riding toward the east.

Instantly his eyes confirmed what his nose had suspicioned—the rider was he who had stolen his pretty pebbles.

The light of rage flared suddenly in the gray eyes as the ape-man dropped lower among the branches until he moved almost directly above the unconscious Werper.

There was a quick leap, and the Belgian felt a heavy body hurtle onto the rump of his terror-stricken mount. The horse, snorting, leaped forward. Giant arms encircled the rider, and in the twinkling of an eye he was dragged from his saddle to the narrow trail by a naked white giant.

Recognition came to Werper with the first glance at his captor's face, and a pallor of fear overspread his features. Strong fingers were at his throat, fingers of steel. He tried to cry out, to plead for his life, but the cruel fingers denied him speech, as they were as surely denying him life.

"The pretty pebbles?" cried the man upon his breast. "What did you with the pretty pebbles—with Tarzan's pretty pebbles?"

The fingers relaxed to permit of a reply. For some time Werper could only choke and cough—at last he regained the powers of speech.

"Achmet Zek, the Arab, stole them from me!" he cried. "He made me give up the pouch and the pebbles."

"I saw all that," replied Tarzan; "but the pebbles in the pouch were not the pebbles of Tarzan—they were only such pebbles as fill the bottoms of the rivers, and the shelving banks beside them. Even the Arab would not have them, for he threw them away in anger when he had looked on them, it is my pretty pebbles that I want—where are they?"

"I do not know; I do not know!" cried Werper. "I gave them to Achmet Zek, or he would have killed me. A few minutes later he followed me along the trail to slay me, although he had promised to molest me no further, and I shot and killed him; but the pouch was not upon his person, and though I searched about the jungle for some time, I could not find it."

"I found it, I tell you," growled Tarzan," and I also found the pebbles which Achmet Zek had thrown away in disgust. They were not Tarzan's pebbles. You have hidden them! Tell me where they are, or I will kill you," and the brown fingers of the ape-man closed a little tighter upon the throat of his victim.

Werper struggled to free himself. "My God, Lord Greystoke," he managed to scream, "would you commit murder for a handful of stones?"

The fingers at his throat relaxed; a puzzled, far-away expression softened the gray eyes.

"Lord Greystoke!" repeated the ape-man. "Lord Greystoke! Who is Lord Greystoke? Where have I heard that name before?"

"Why, man, you are Lord Greystoke!" cried the Belgian. "You were injured by falling rock when the earthquake shattered the passage to the underground chamber to which you and your black Waziri had come to fetch golden ingots back to your bungalow. The blow shattered your memory. You are John Clayton, Lord Greystoke—don't you remember.

"John Clayton, Lord Greystoke!" repeated Tarzan. Then for a moment he was silent. Presently his hand went falteringly to his forehead, an expression of wonderment filled his eyes of wonderment and sudden understanding. The forgotten name had reawakened the returning memory that had been struggling to reassert itself. The ape-man relinquished his grasp upon the throat of the Belgian and leaped to his feet.

"God!" he cried, and then, "Jane!" Suddenly he turned toward Werper. "My wife?" he asked. "What has become of her? The farm is in ruins. You know. You have had something to do with all this. You followed me to Opar; you stole the jewels which I thought but pretty pebbles. You are a crook! Do not try to tell me that you are not."

"He is worse than a crook," said a quiet voice close behind them.

Tarzan turned in astonishment to see a tall man in uniform standing in the trail a few paces from him. Back of the man were a number of black soldiers in the uniform of the Congo Free State.

"He is a murderer, monsieur," continued the officer. "I have followed him for a long time to take him back to stand trial for the killing of his superior officer."

Werper was upon his feet now, groaning, white and trembling, at the fate which had overtaken him, even in the fastnesses of the labyrinthine jungle.

Instinctively he turned to flee, but Tarzan of the Apes reached out a strong hand and grasped him by the shoulder.

"Wait!" said the ape-man to his captive. "This gentleman wishes you, and so do I. When I am through with you he may have you. Tell me what has become of my wife?"

The Belgian officer eyed the almost naked white giant with curiosity. He noted the strange contrast of primitive weapons and apparel, and the easy, fluent French which the man spoke. The former denoted the lowest, the later the highest type of culture. He could not quite determine the social status of this strange creature; but he knew that he did not relish the easy assurance with which the fellow presumed to dictate when he might take possession of the prisoner.

"Pardon me," he said, stepping forward and placing his hand on Werper's other shoulder; "but this gentleman is my prisoner. He must come with me."

"When I am through with him," replied Tarzan quietly.

The officer turned and beckoned to the soldiers standing in the trail behind him. A company of uniformed blacks stepped forward and surrounded the ape-man and his captive.

"Both the law and the power to enforce it are upon my side," announced the officer. "Let us have no trouble. If you have a grievance against this man, you may return with me and enter your charge regularly before an authorized tribunal."

"Your legal rights are not above suspicion, my friend," replied Tarzan, "and your power to enforce your commands are only apparent—not real. You have presumed to enter British territory with an armed force. Where is your authority for this invasion? Where are the extradition papers which warrant the arrest of this man? And what assurance have you that I cannot bring an armed force about you that will prevent your return to the Congo Free State?"

The Belgian lost his temper. "I have no disposition to argue with a naked savage!" he cried. "Unless you wish to be hurt you will not interfere with me. Take the prisoner, sergeant!"

Werper raised his lips close to Tarzan's ear. "Keep me from them, and I can show you the very spot where I saw your wife last night," he whispered. "She cannot be far from here at this very minute.

The soldiers, following the signal from their sergeant, closed in to seize Werper. Tarzan grabbed the Belgian about the waist, and bearing him beneath his arm as he might have done a sack of flour, leaped forward in an attempt to break through the cordon.

His right fist caught the nearest soldier upon the jaw and sent him hurtling backward upon his fellows. Clubbed rifles were torn from the hands of those who barred his way, and right and left the black soldiers stumbled aside in the force of the ape-man's savage break for liberty.

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

EVERYDAY STUFF

Highwayman H. C. of L.

I've been to market with my wife
And I learned a thing or two surprising.
Dick Turpin has returned to life
And things to eat he's advertising.
No longer does he ride a bay
And cause wayfarers many curses.
He does his work another way
But now, he always, lightens purses.

He's now a trader "on the make"
And charges in this "git and grab age"
A hundred dollars for a steak
And fifty for a head of cabbage.
The staff of life is made of gold
As is, we find, the almost butter.
('Tis but the simple truth I've told!
The simple truth is all I'd utter!)

He told us just why things are dear—
Though what he said I can't remember.
He looked for different things this year,
'Twixt January and December.
His talk went on from bad to worse.
The truth I'll tell you since you ask it:
We brought our things home in a purse;
We took our money in a basket.

GRIP ALEXANDER.

DREAMLAND ADVENTURES

By DADDY

A complete new adventure each week, beginning Monday and ending Saturday.

FINLAND

(Peggy and Billy Belgium find themselves among strange sprites, some of whom are agreeable and some of whom are mean. The mean sprites attack Billy.)

CHAPTER III

Billy Learns Funland Secrets

BILLY braced himself to meet the attack of the mean sprites. Joker, Mocker and Wit doubled up their fists and struck at him fiercely. But after their first blows Billy began to laugh. Their desperate punches had no more weight than whiffs of smoke. They didn't hurt a bit.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Billy. "Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Peggy and all the agreeable sprites.

In a rage the mean sprites tried a new form of attack. They crowded close around Billy and covered his mouth with their hands. Now Billy quit laughing in a hurry, for he found that he couldn't breathe. The misty hands of the sprites were like heavy smoke—they smothered him.

But suddenly Billy blew out with all his might. Whiff! Off went Mocker's hand and he jumped to catch it and fasten it back on his arm. Peggy, seeing this, ran up and blew at Joker, and she blew so hard she blew a big hole in Joker's stomach. He jumped away with a howl and began to patch himself up. Peggy blew at Wit and he went bawling up the street trying to catch half of his head that had been blown off. It was plain that Billy and Peggy had hit upon another of the weak points of the mean sprites—the first being their tendency to get fussed when laughed at.

Billy ran at Joker, blowing hard and Joker took to his legs. In a moment all the mean sprites were running away as fast as they could.

The agreeable sprites crowded joyfully around Billy and Peggy. "Hurrah!" they cried. "This gallant knight and fair lady have beaten the pests of Funland!"

Now Peggy asked a question she had been wanting to ask ever since she had noticed the sad look on the faces of the agreeable sprites: "If this is Funland why are you so serious?"

"Because those Good-Time-Spoilers have upset our happy, care-free realm with their mischievous pranks, turning Funland into Meanland," chorused the sprites. "And because they have carried their harmful joking so far as to kidnap King Fun and hide him away."

"Ouch, oh, oh!" suddenly shrieked Tickle, dancing around on one foot and holding up the other.

"What's the matter?" cried Billy.

"I stepped on a burning cigar stub. It hurts," moaned Tickle.

"Does fire hurt you sprites?" asked Billy in surprise.

"Heat just drives us wild," answered Laugh.

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Billy excitedly, forgetting Tickle's burned foot. "That makes three ways of punishing the mean sprites—they are afraid of ridicule, afraid of having holes blown in them, and afraid of heat."

"And they are afraid of Sense, the Funland policeman," added Humor. "He is a terror when he catches them doing harm."

"Four ways!" shouted Billy. "That's enough for a plan to force them to free King Fun and promise to be good." Billy's eyes glanced up and down the street as he thought hard. They chanced to rest on a tar heater which workmen had left there after doing a repair job.

"We will get them in that tar pot, then we can make them do anything we want them to," he mused.

"There they are now," exclaimed Peggy. "See, they are planning a joke on Mammy Chloe, our laundress."

A short distance away the mean sprites were gathering around an old negro mammy who was carrying a basket of clean laundry balanced on her head.

"It will be their last joke in some time," declared Billy. "If my plan works we will give them a roasting they will never forget. Come on, all!"

(In the next chapter will be told how Billy gives the mean sprites a big scare.)

MOVING PICTURE FUNNIES

Cut out the picture on all four sides. Then carefully fold dotted line 1 its entire length. Then dotted line 2, and so on. Fold each section underneath, accurately. When completed turn over and you'll find a surprising result. Save the pictures.

SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER—She Has Sharp Ears

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By HAYWARD