

By Sidney Smith

The Woman Hater

By Ruby Ayres

THIS STARTS THE STORY

Ten years prior to the opening of the story, Miles Faversham, a young man who had emerged a woman hater, his friend, Tranter, is in love with a beautiful woman named Laitie Dundas, who proves to be Faversham's old sweetheart. A lot of what things are said about her, but are not true. Mrs. Tranter, Philip's mother, implores Miles to prevent the marriage, and they wrap together that Faversham will prevent Philip from marrying Laitie. Dundas writes to Laitie and she tells him she still loves him. He leads her on until she discovers Tranter's plan, and she breaks an engagement with Tranter to marry Faversham. Philip, who is in love with Laitie, and Faversham in the cafe, Tranter tries to force a confession from Laitie, but she is angry and evasive. Philip, unhappy—seeks out Laitie, but she sends him off and sees her. Faversham tells her she must choose between him and Philip. Again, she tells Faversham that she loves him. He expresses the wish that she leave New York. She writes him a clever letter which tells him to go to the office where they spent so many happy hours together years ago. And prior to leaving, she writes him a letter which says "I never saw you again."

Faversham said, with overdone indifference, "I suppose you would not know her?" Mrs. Dundas is her name. "The lady at the White cottage! Why, we all know her!" she told him eagerly. "She is so pretty; she wears such lovely clothes."

Faversham laughed. "Clothes not very suitable for this village, I dare say," he submitted.

He hurried through his meal and went on up the village street to the cottage where the White cottage was situated, and his heartbeats quickened absurdly as he approached the door.

It was a bright, sunny morning, with a nip of frost in the air, and he saw the white cottage through the trees which were in the front door and knocked. Nobody answered for a moment. He tried the latch impatiently, but it yielded in his hand, and he opened the door.

A steep, narrow flight of stairs went up directly opposite, and as he stood hesitating on the doorstep some one came running down them. It was Mrs. Dundas. She stopped dead with a little choking cry when she saw him.

"Miles!"

Faversham moved to the foot of the stairs, looking up at her, the eyes twinkling in every detail of her daintiness and the tell-tale color that flooded her face.

"Well, you don't seem very pleased to see me," he said, and his voice was just as cold as steel.

"Pleased!" She came down the remaining stairs with a little rush and into his arms.

And she—she lies in my arms as some time ago, as a pair of bright eyes met his. "Just a touch to try, and off it came, 'tis a wiser can I let it fall?"

Perhaps the punishment was responsible, or the flood of old memories that had come upon Faversham as he walked up the village street, for at any rate, at the moment when Mrs. Dundas ran into his arms he forgot everything he had just said and just as he was about to kiss her, he remembered the early days of their love. "So you are glad to see me?" he asked.

"Glad! Oh, can't you find a better word?"

Her eyes were like stars. She took his hand and dragged him into the little room where the fire crackled cheerily, and where breakfast was waiting.

"Why have you come? Why didn't you let me know? I suppose it really is you?" She was laughing and dancing round him like an excited child, and for once Faversham fell in with her mood. "I wanted to surprise you. You used to love surprises, do you remember?" only made up my mind late last night, and caught the right train down."

He remembered suddenly the reason that had prompted his visit, and his face sobered as he caught her hand. "Laitie, Tranter, or any one else?"

"She looked amazed."

"Down here! Why, I've only been here a day and a half, and nobody but you knows where I am! Of course nobody has been. Wasn't it?"

"Nothing—I only wondered," he gave a quick sigh of relief. "Don't you think we might have breakfast? I had some at the inn, but I'm hungry again now; the coffee smells so good."

"She flushed rosy."

"Breakfast! Of course. How lovely! Just you and I together."

She went to the door and called to the maid. In an instant she was back again.

"Miles, this is like years and years ago. Do you remember we had breakfast together then—the morning before you got back to New York? I got up early to see you off."

"I remember that I never ate a thing because I was too busy looking at you and imploring you not to flirt with that sandy-haired boomer who used to follow you about. There was a note of bitterness in his voice. The old memories were not all sweet."

"You were absurdly jealous," she declared. "I had broken my hand through my arm. You won't ever need to be jealous of me again. Never! Do you hear?"

"And do you believe me?"

He laughed, ruefully.

"I admit this I do," he answered. "Mrs. Dundas's maid brought breakfast. She looked astounded at Faversham, and answered his 'good-morning' rather curtly. Miles looked after her with raised brows as she left the room. "That maid of yours doesn't like me," he said.

Mrs. Dundas laughed.

"Nonsense! Of course she does. I wouldn't part with her for worlds. If I lost Lester it would be like losing my right hand."

She took her seat at the head of the table.

"Are you going to sit beside me, or opposite?" She looked at him shyly.

"Miles, do you know how shy I feel?"

"Then I sit and better sit opposite, or this breakfast may be wasted in the way I wanted that other, years ago!"

"She made a little grimace at him.

"Not now, Lester, you are so much older and wiser. You see, I have not forgotten what you said the other day in town!"

But this morning it was she who made only a pretense of eating, and Faversham noted the fact grimly, and he said:

"Once he had lost his appetite for weeks and months on his account. He had lived on love and moonshine and hope and every other fool thing in which young lovers are supposed to revel. It seemed unlikely that he would ever again be capable of such a feat."

There was a vague pity in his heart: as he looked at her, Life was a curious thing. Why could she not be cared for all these years, instead of now?

As soon as the meal was ended, he rose and went over to the window.

"The sun shines, and the tide is out," he said. "I am going to take you for that walk on the sands you promised me. Have you got any boots that won't be ruined with salt water?"

"Of course I have! I came down here dressed for the party."

She went off to get ready, and Faversham heard her moving about upstairs and singing happily.

After all, what was she but a child in her varying moods, he asked himself tolerantly. And then a sharp edge of bitterness jagged him. Not such a child but that she could play with a man's heart and break it between her delicate fingers. Not such a child but that she knew how to woo and win a man back to his old allegiance.

"I will never go back," said Faversham fiercely. He spoke the words aloud, unconsciously.

"I beg your pardon," said Lester's pert voice at the door. "I thought you spoke, sir," she said smoothly, as Faversham turned.

Faversham made no answer. He disliked the girl, and knew instinctively that she disliked him. She busied herself clearing the breakfast things away. She lingered in the room deliberately till Mrs. Dundas came down again. As they left the house together, Miles, turning to close the gate, saw Lester watching them from the window.

"Mrs. Dundas said, looking up at him. "Yesterday it rained, and I very nearly packed my boxes and ran back to town."

"It rained in town, too. We go down there to the sands. If I remember, I'll be glad to see you."

He glanced down at her feet and laughed. "You don't call those sensible shoes, do you?"

She stopped and looked down at her little brown boots.

"Why, they are ever so thick," she said indignantly.

Faversham shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well. I suppose I shall have to carry you if we go to any pools."

She laughed excitedly.

"As you did before, you mean, Miles? Do you remember when we nearly got caught by the tide?"

"I do; but I have no intention of repeating the experience, if that is what you mean. I had the fright of my life when you were the kind of 'woman' who would never allow yourself to be saved if the worst came to the worst. You would clutch a man round the neck and drown him and yourself, too."

"Am I such a stupid person?"

"Very few women can keep their heads when there is real danger," he maintained.

"But then you hate women," she said. "I don't think you did."

"That is the first thing he ever told me about you."

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

SHE gave a little sobbing cry.

"Miles! In that the truth? You are not saying it just to please me?"

"Certainly am not. It is the truth. I know that she has refused to marry me. He paused. "I told you that Mrs. Dundas is taken it very hardy," he added, reluctantly.

"Dear poor boy! Have you seen him since?"

"No. He called last night, but I was not in."

Mrs. Tranter clasped her hands nervously.

"If only she will be firm with him. You know what he is. How he always manages to get his own way. I have never known anybody who is able to resist him, Miles."

"I think you will find that Mrs. Dundas is perfectly capable of doing so," he answered.

"She looked up at him with tears in her eyes."

"And I have you to thank for this. Can never thank you."

"Dear lady, don't try. Perhaps it is not such a kindness as you think."

"You never will allow me to thank you for anything you do," she said, reproachfully.

Faversham did not answer. He was looking hard at a photograph of Philip standing on the mantel shelf.

"A happy-looking fellow. It was taken in the untroubled days before Mrs. Dundas entered his life. A swift pang of remorse shot through Faversham's heart."

Was trouble going to break his friend as once, years ago, it had broken him? Mrs. Tranter was watching him narrowly.

"You don't look very happy today, Miles?"

He roused himself with an effort.

"Your imagination," he said, smiling. "But, as a matter of fact, I am a little worried—about Philip. I am afraid you will find that this is a very disagreeable appointment—badly. You will probably find that he has turned against me as usual. Not that it matters very much, but I am trying to prepare you for what may come. He thinks—quite rightly—that I have been the cause of Mrs. Dundas going away. He'll hate me for it."

"For a time, perhaps, but he will get over it."

Faversham shook his head.

Her anxious eyes questioned him.

"You are keeping something back from me; you have not told me everything."

"Everything that I know," he answered.

"If Philip blames you, I shall tell him it was all my fault," Mrs. Tranter insisted.

Faversham smiled. "I hope you will not tell him anything of the sort," he said, decidedly. "I am more than capable of bearing my own burdens."

But he was filled with apprehension. Tranter was not a man who would easily forget—he was not a man that would easily forgive, either.

"His Mr. Tranter called," he asked Grayson as soon as he got back.

"No, sir."

Faversham turned and stared at him.

"No, Are you sure?"

"Quite sure, sir."

There was no news of him all day, and at last, feeling restless and impatient to get the interview over, Faversham went round to his friend's rooms, only to find that Philip had left town that morning.

"Left town. Why, where has he gone?"

The woman in charge of the rooms did not know. He had taken a portable suitcase, she said, but had left no word as to when he would be returning.

Faversham did not answer. He was supposed to have been out where Mrs. Dundas was, and had gone down to the beach, and had come back in a very angry and rage. It was not until he had hinted at her that he had been there.

His heart seemed to stand still. He blamed himself bitterly. "Where his interference had led them to anything happened to Laitie..."

He could not face the thought. After this was the who had driven her to the beach, and had written to Tranter. Supposing her apprehension, at which he had laughed when they parted, had been a true one after all, and he never saw her again.

He would be early morning when he reached the village by the sea, which in the past they had called their paradise. No doubt she would think an ever-waiting longing to see her had prompted his visit.

Faversham smiled to himself as he looked out of the car window into the darkness. Six and a half years ago he had taken this same journey one spring morning. He had matched a week-end to spend one day with the girl he loved her on the golden sands, and feel the fresh salt breeze in his face.

"Tomorrow..."

He had dead of its own accord. Supposing there was no tomorrow!

He never closed his eyes all night, he sagged his nerves and added to his vague fears. It was getting light when at last he dozed off.

The sunshine was streaming in at the window. He awoke to find his feet feeling a little confused and giddy; a little made him take this journey.

How Mrs. Dundas would laugh at him if he could laugh at himself now.

The little village had not changed at all. It was just as small, just as sleepy and unprogressive as he remembered it. He looked furtively at the few people he almost seemed as if they must recognize him, although he had been there for such a long time.

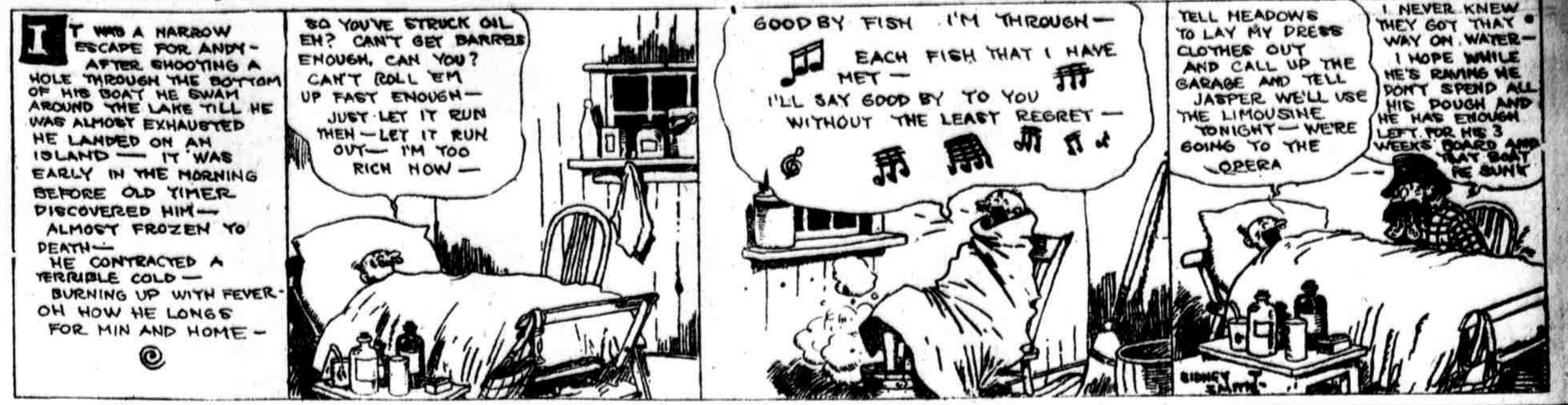
He could not shake off the feeling that he was stepping back into the past. He could not quite crush his light-hearted little inn the village boasted and ordered breakfast.

It was only 8 o'clock then. He supposed it would be at least another three hours before he could see Mrs. Dundas. The girl who waited on him was smiling friendly. It was not difficult to induce her to talk.

Were there many visitors in the village? She shook her head. Nobody very many. The weather was not good. A number of invalids who came nearly every day—that was all.

"A lady I know is staying here,"

THE GUMPS—The Day After He Scuttled His Own Boat

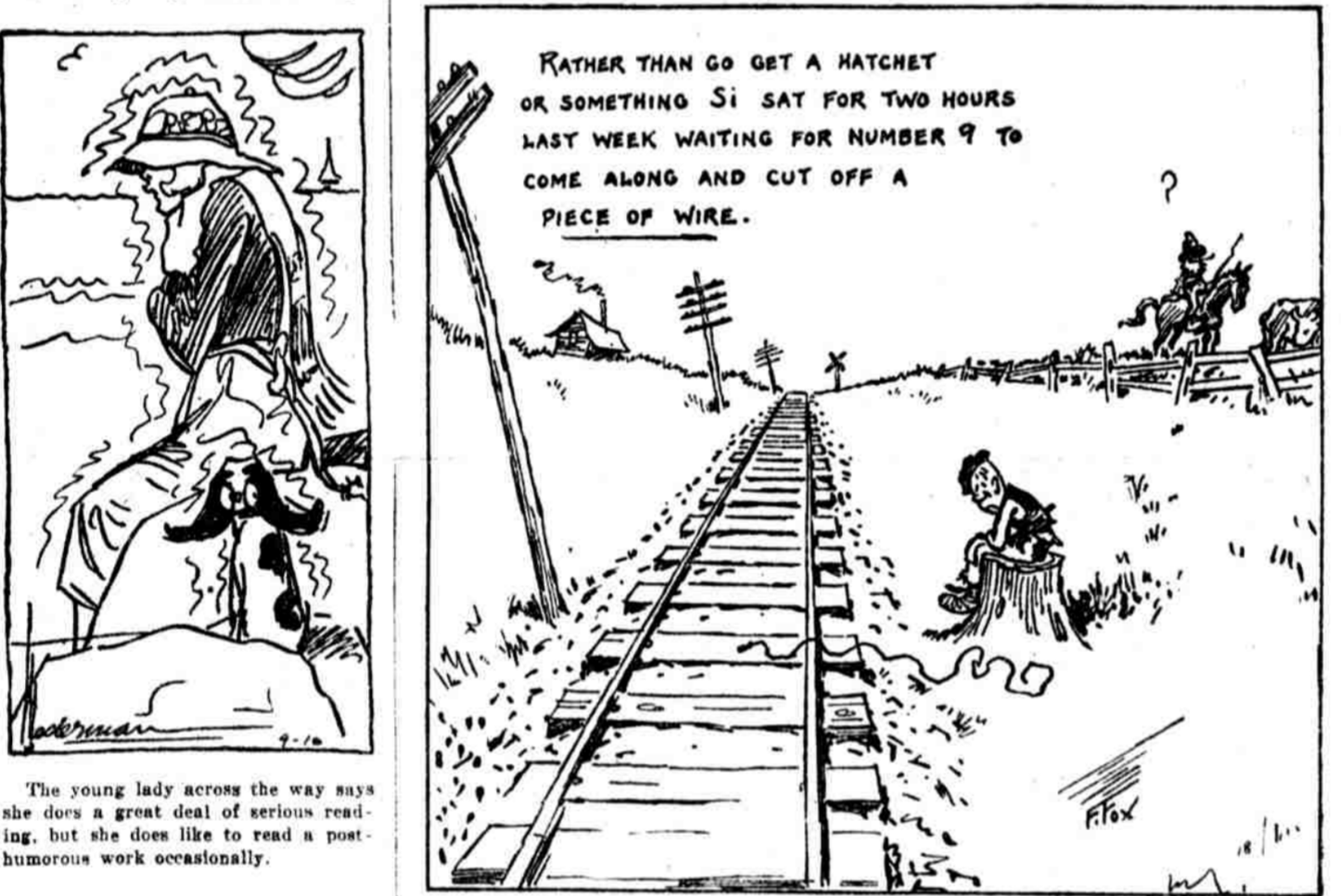


SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Breakfast



SI DOLE, THE WORLD'S LAZIEST WHITE MAN

By FONTAINE FOX



PETEY—Now That Women Have the Vote

By C. A. Voight



"CAP" STUBBS—Sammy'll Be Rich Some Day—if He Lives

By Edwin

