SUNNY DUCROW

By HENRY ST. JOHN COOPER

THIS STARTS THE STORY

Elizabeth Ann Ducrow, known as "Sunny," works in a pickle factory. She has aspirations for something higher and tells Bert Jackson, who works at "the pickles" with her, that she intends to ride in a motorcar some day. Sunny lives in a narrow, dirty street with her aunt, who is grumbly, stupid and improvident. Sunny and Bert are hungry for a day in the country and, lacking the funds, they sing on the street for pennies and are arrested for "vagrancy," but pardoned by the magistrate. Leslie Montressor, a well-known actress, sees Sunny in court and is impressed with her originality. She brings Sunny and Bert before Max Hemmingway, manager of the play in which she is appearing. He, too, is impressed and engages Sunny at two pounds a week for three years. Sunny, always loyal, insists that he give a part to Bert. She has some trouble in keeping Bert buoyed up, and "Whatever happens, it's my fault," Sunny said cheerily. "It'll be my fault, won't it, when you're getting five 'undred a year and riding about in taxicabs, Bert?" There is some difficulty in getting into the theatre, as every attendant sends Sunny and Bert elsewhere. Finally they get to the manager's office and Mr. Hemmingway remarks to his associate, Mr. Rostheimer, "I've got an idea that, with luck, she'll drive the public crazy." "I believe you," he said. "Yes, I believe you!"

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

CHAPTER V

Getting On

FOR the first time in her life Sunny had received a parcel. It had come from a well-known West End shop.

"I don't know nothing about it!" Mrs. Melkin said. "It come by a cart. There it is!"

Sunny opened the parcel. It contained a dress, some underclothing, and a good pair of boots, but as to who sent it there was no indication.

"Some one trying to do me a turn," she said. "I wish they wouldn't whoever it is. It's about my size, too!"

It was a plain but neat and serviceable dress of black serge. It was the very first brand-new dress Sunny had ever owned in her life. She put it on and looked at herself in the glass.

"I wish I knew who sent it!" she said. "I'd send it back. I don't want favors from no one!"

"You're an ungrateful child!" Mrs. Melkin said. "After me savin' and scrapin'—— She paused.

"You—you"—Sunny gasped—"you got me this?"

Mrs. Melkin hesitated.

"Well, if I did, ain't you my own sister's child?" she said. "What's the 'arm? I like to see you look nice, I do; and me saving and scraping——"

"You old darling!" Sunny said.

She believed it. She believed that her aunt had sent her the clothes, while, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Melkin knew no more about it than Sunny did.

"Scraped and scraped, I did!" she said. "Put it by, bit by bit, for you, Elizabeth Ann!"

"You're an old dear!" Sunny said. "I'd take from you what I wouldn't take from no one else!"

She was wearing the new dress and boots and the new hat the following day when she met Bert.

He looked at her in surprise, but said nothing.

"A present from aunt!" she said. "How do I look, Bert?"

He looked at her and blinked wth his melancholy eyes.

"You look a fair knockout, Sunny!" he said. "Sort of make me wonder all the time if it is you!"

"It's nothing to the clothes I'll have one day!" she said. "Come on!"

They hurried on. They had to be at rehearsal at 10. This time there was no difficulty about their admittance. The man in the little boxoffice smiled good morning to Sunny.

"Got your little lamb with you still, I see!" he said, looking at Bert.

What happened after that Sunny could remember only as a confused kind of dream. She found herself on a huge stage. There were no footlights. The great auditorium was a black void, through which shrouded candelabra glimmered in ghostly fashion.

Some one was shouting and raving. There were a number of girls and a number of young men who were going through some kind of a performance.

"Now, then, you're in the chorus, aren't you?"

Bert found himself roughly torn from Sunny's side. He was hurled into a corner among a lot of young men, who looked at him superciliously.

They were going through a kind of dance, accompanied by a song. Now they thrust out their right arms and moved a step toward the center of the stage.

They were singing something about a girl from Ohio. Sunny watched them; she watched Bert. Bert looked intensely unhappy. He, too, thrust out his right arm and took a step with the rest. He was trying to sing, but he was woefully out of tune. Sunny smiled. Little by little she began to laugh. Others standing about her followed the direction of her eyes and saw Bert. Then they laughed. Soon every one was laughing.

"That chap at the end there looks like a funeral! For goodness' sake kick him away!" some one said. "Look at him!"

"Leave him alone." It was Mr. Hemmingway who had come on. "Leave him alone!" He looked at Bert. "Say nothing to him. Let him go on his own way. I've got an idea!"

"He's spoiling the chorus," the stage manager said.

"I've got my own ideas, Jakes!" Mr. Hemmingway said. "Let that fellow alone for the present, at any rate."

"Very good! as you like!" Mr. Jakes said. "Now, then, ladies of the chorus!" he bellowed. "Come on, you!" He glared at Sunny. "You are in the chorus, I suppose! Hurry yourself!"

Sunny walked deliberately across the stage.

"Where have I got to stand?" she asked.

"Get into your place!" the stage-manager bellowed. A girl made room for Sunny.

"He's in one of his tantrums this morning; got out of bed the wrong side!" she muttered. "He's a beast any time—sometimes a worse beast than others. What's your name?"

"Sunny. What's yours."

"Sunny what?"

"Funny our names should be alike, isn't it?" Sunny said. "Mine's Sunny Ducrow and yours is Sunny Watt. Who give you that name? I mean you wasn't——"

"Silence!" shouted the stage manager.

"Now, then, ladies!"

The orchestra struck up and the chorus burst into song. Sunny did not sing for the simple reason she was hearing the chorus for the first time.

"Sing up!" the stage manager yelled at her. "Hang it, what are you here for?"

"Not to be hollered at by you!" Sunny said.

There was a sudden and deathly silence.

"What's that?" the manager demanded.

"What I said is, 'ow can I sing up when I don't know the blooming song?" Sunny said.

"You ought to know it!"

"Ought! How can I? Could you know, for instance, 'ow to make raspberry jam first go off out of apples and coloring and flavoring and birdseed? You couldn't do it, could you, unless you was showed 'ow?"

He stared at her.

"I don't know what you are talking about, but I do know this: if you want to find yourself outside——"

"I don't," Sunny said, "and I ain't going to! So keep your hair on, mister!"

"You'll get fired, sure!" the girl beside Sunny muttered.

"Not me!" Sunny said. "But I ain't goin' to be hollered at by no one. Wilkins at the factory tried it once, then he gave up; so'll he!"

Mr. Hemmingway was talking to the stage manager in a low tone.

"Oh, very well, but I can't have mutiny among the chorus. You'll have to shift her out of it if she goes on on those lines," Mr. Jakes said.

He altered his tone and his manner a few moments later as Miss Montressor came on the stage. She had a song to sing, which she sang exquisitely. Even the chorus left off whispering to listen to her. Tears stood in Sunny's eyes when she had finished.

"Sing your head off and your heart out of you, can't she?" she whispered. "Lor', what wouldn't I give to sing like that! I know 'er, too." She paused.

Miss Montressor, her song finished, looked round. She saw Sunny, and came straight to her.

"Well, little girl," she said pleasantly, "so you are here! And how smart you look!"

She took Sunny's hand in hers and held it while she was talking to her; the other girls looked on enviously. Leslie Montressor was a great star; to know her intimately, as this girl seemed to, was an honor not to be scoffed at. They looked at Sunny with new respect. So, too, did the stage manager. It was noticeable that he left Sunny alone after that.

"How did you get to know her like that?" the girl who had stood next to Sunny asked.

"Me and her was had up at the same police court. I don't know what she was charged with," Sunny said, "but me and Bert was charged with singing in the street. We got off; so did she, it seems."

The girl laughed; she thought it was some joke of Sunny's.

"My name is Daisy de Venn," she said.

"You tole me just now——"

"No, I didn't; it was your mistake, I said 'Sunny what?' I mean what was your other name."

"I am an idiot, ain't I?" Sunny said.

"I'll introduce you to the others. They are rather a decent lot, take them all round. How about your dresses for the chorus?"

"I ain't bothering," Sunny said.

"But you'll have to see the Wardrobe about them." Sunny nodded.

"I will; only there ain't no hurry as I know of. Besides, I shan't want them long."

The other girl looked at her.

"You'll want them for the run, unless you get fired." Sunny shook her head.

"I shan't stop long in the chorus," she said. "Not that it isn't all right being 'n the chorus," she added; "only I prefer to have a part of my own."

"I dare say you do," Miss de Venn laughed. "So would most of us. But parts don't grow on every tree, my girl."

"It's a-growing on the tree I'm sitting under, and presently one's going to drop on me!" Sunny said.

When the first strangeness had worn off, Sunny adapted herself to circumstances with ease. She learned the words of the choruses and the necessary actions; even the stage-manager had no fault to find with her. He was not naturally a bad-tempered or evilly disposed man, as most of the girls thought; but the stage manager's life is not all beer and skittles when a big new production is being made ready, as he told Sunny one day when they were the best of friends.

Sunny's part as the long-lost daughter rescued from the pickle factory was of the briefest. It consisted of so-thing under twenty lines, which she learned thoroughly inside half an hour. She was what is called a "quick study."

"It don't hardly seem worth while me getting myself up and all the rest of it to come on and say just that!" she said to Bert.

"You ought to have a song," he said.

"I ought; but I ain't got one."

"I was thinking about a song as 'ud suit you," Bert said.

"You!" she said. "Why don't you write it out?" Bert nodded gloomily.

"I s'pose every one'll laugh at it if I do; but I'll have a shot at it. I got the strap the other night all right," he added cheerily. "Father gave it to me when he heard about me leaving the pickle factory."

"Bound to," Sunny said. "Did it hurt, Bert?"

"Same as usual 'bout," he said thoughtfully. "I'll have a shot at that there song tonight," he added. He went his way.

"Got the song?" Sunny asked him, as they met the next morning on their way to rehearsal.

Bert nodded.

"It didn't turn out as well as I thought," he said. "No one 'ud look at it. It's no good. Any'ow, here you are." He brought out a dirty piece of paper, and Sunny stopped in the roadway to read the pencilled words.

"Bert, you never wrote this!" she said.

"Me! I did!" he said. "Why not?"

"Why, it's fine! It suits splendid! I'm going to take it straight to Mr. Hemmingway."

"It's no good. He'll turn it down; very likely kick us both out," he said. "What's the use?"

"I'm a-going to take it to him, anyhow," Sunny said.

"Well, Miss Ducrow?" Mr. Hemmingway asked a trifle impatiently some hours later.

Sunny came smiling into the office.

"Me and Bert has been talking," she said. "Bert thinks as my part 'ud go better if I had a song to sing."

"I dare say," he said dryly. "Now, I'm busy; I'm sorry, but——"

"So Bert wrote a song that he thought might do. Here it is. It's called Piccalilli Lily, and——"

"I've got no time," he said. "It's not a bad idea, but——"

"Here it is," Sunny said. She thrust the dirty scrap of paper in front of him.

Mr. Hemmingway glanced at it. He hesitated, then he took it. He read it through. It was not bad. It commenced:

"I'm Piccalilli Lily,
And I work in Piccadilly,
A-sticking the labels on the jam—"

"Who wrote this?" he asked.

"Bert did—done it out of his own head," Sunny said. "He thought I might sing it."

"Leave it here," he said briefly. "I'll think about it."

"Have a look through this," Mr. Hemmingway said some time later to the musical director. "and, if you think you can manage it, hang some sort of a tune to it. The meter seems all right."

Signor Posetti nodded. He looked at the paper.

"Nice swing!" he said. "Ter umity, tumity, tumity—Yes, all right. I'll go over it presently."

For three days Sunny heard no more about the song. Bert had forgotten it, except that he had a vague idea that he would be dismissed for having dared to write it.

Sunny had been at rehearsal a week. She had made a few friends and perhaps one or two enemies. Girls whose natures had soured a little by years of neglect, by years of having to remain in the background while they saw others and newer comers forge ahead, disliked her.

"Wait till the first night, she'll go to pieces," they said. And they hoped that they would prove true prophets.

"Miss Ducrow wanted," some one said.

Sunny went. She found Mr. Hemmingway with the musical director.

"That song," Mr. Hemmingway said. "Signor Posetti has set it to music. Think you can catch the tune?"

"Try me," Sunny said.

The signor sat down at the piano in the office and played the air. It was a very catchy, bright air—the very thing for the words. The words had been altered a little here and there, but they stood much as Bert had written them.

"Got it?" Mr. Hemmingway asked.

Sunny nodded. She hummed the tune to herself.

"Lively, isn't it? Wonderful being able to write out music like that. I should not have been able to think of it in a thousand years!"

Signor Posetti smiled. He was open to a little flattery, and this was genuine admiration. He looked at her a

"Now, den, we try it over, yes," he said. "Come!"

His supple fingers touched the keys.

"Don't be frightened," Mr. Hemmingway said.

"Not me!" Sunny smiled. She smiled, showing her white teeth. With the original paper in her hand to guide her in the matter of words, Sunny sang the song over. Never once did her ear play her false; she had got the tune marvelously.

"I'd like to do it again. I'll do it better next time," she said eagerly.

"All right," Mr. Hemmingway said. "Sorry to trouble you, Posetti!"

This time Sunny let herself go. She put more than words, she put actions into her song.

"Fine," Hemmingway said briefly. "You'll do. Send Jackson to me."

Sunny hurried back to the stage.

"It's all right," she whispered to Bert. "They've got wonderful music to your song, and I'm to sing it. Mr Hemmingway wants to see you at once."

"It's the sack," Bert muttered. "I knew it. It's all up." He went wretchedly.

Half an hour later he came back. There was a crushed look on his face; in his hands a piece of paper crackled.

"Have me five pounds for the rights of the words," he said to Sunny. "Five! Look! I dare say it's a bad 'un, though." Sunny laughed.

CONTINUED TOMORROW

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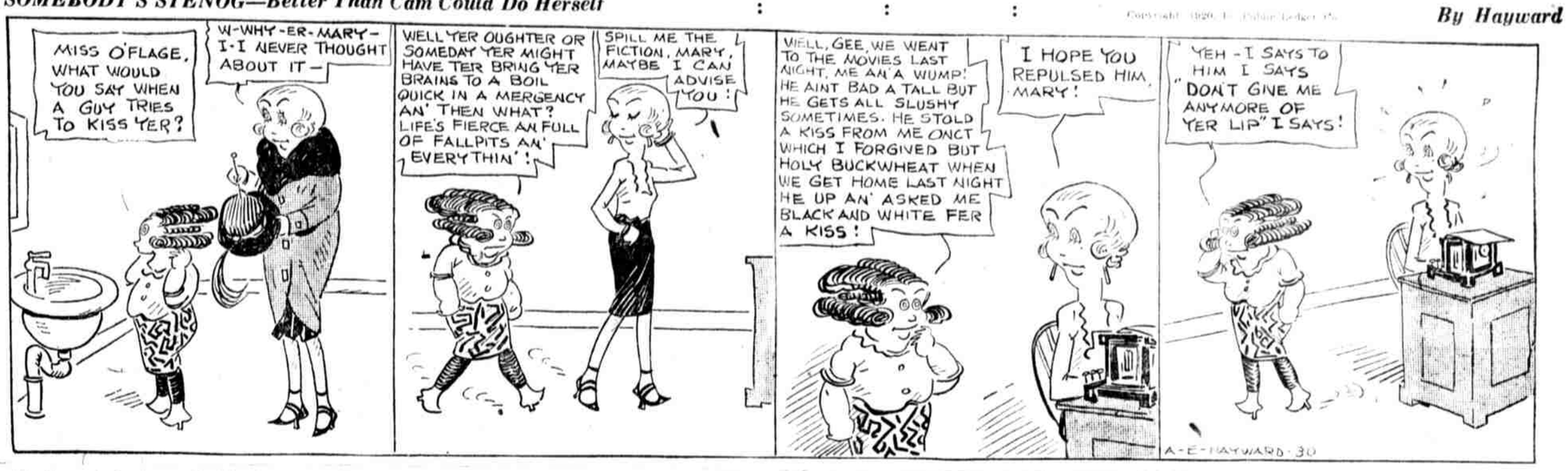
THE GUMPS—Dough—Ray—Me—Dough

By Sidney Smith

SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Better Than Cam Could Do Herself

By Hayward

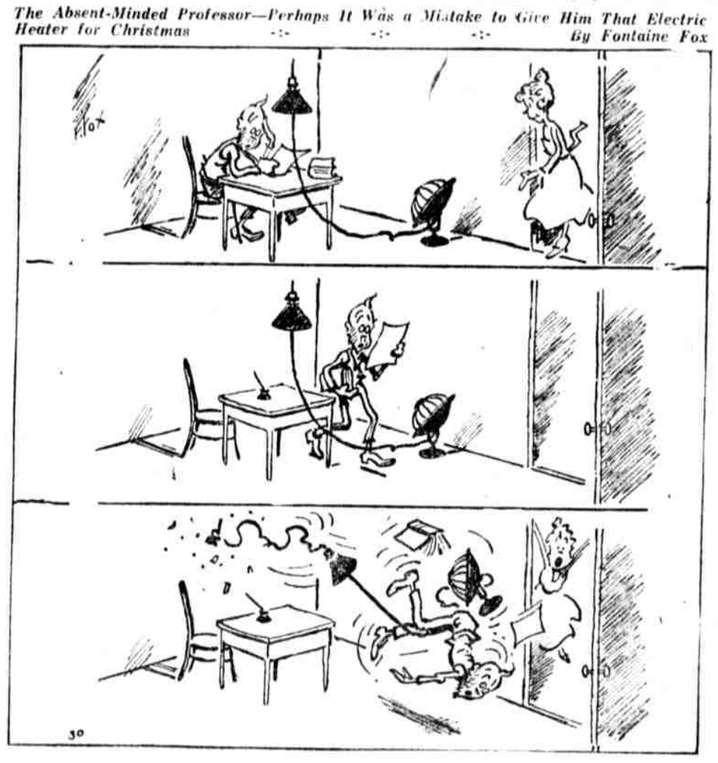


The Young Lady Across the Way

The young lady across the way says the professor of political history at college certainly talks like an independent voter, but he says he is a strong Mugwump and she guesses he ought to know what party he belongs to.

The Absent-Minded Professor—Perhaps It Was a Mistake to Give Him That Electric Heater for Christmas

By Fontaine Fox

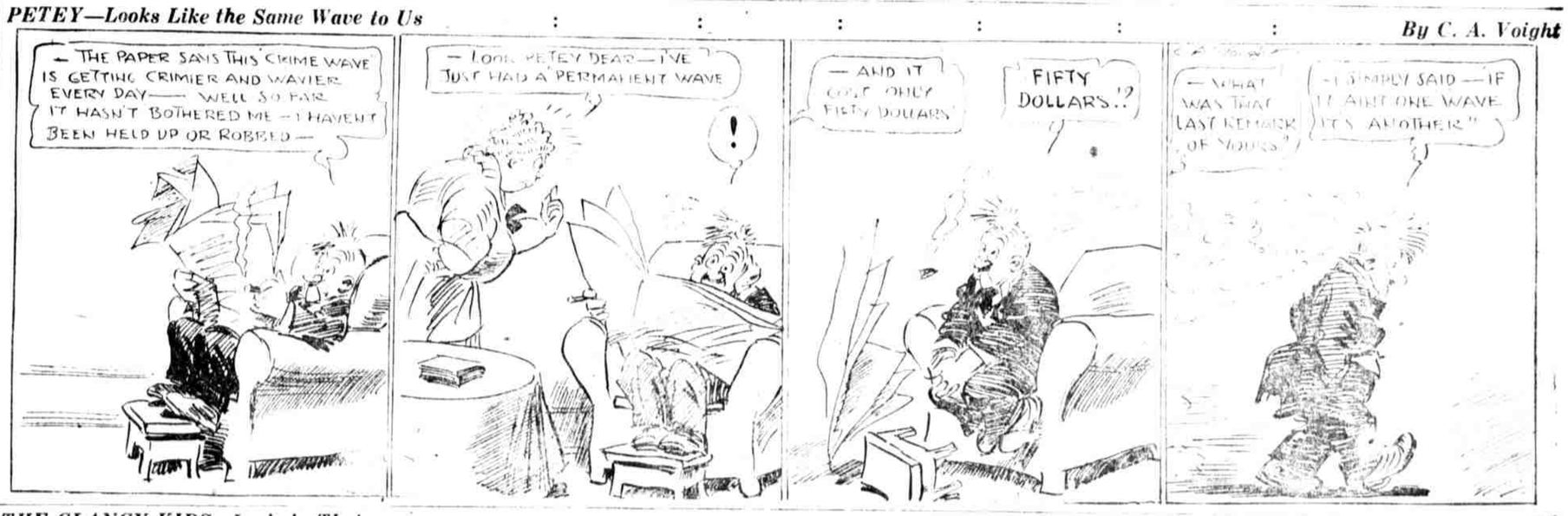


SCHOOL DAYS

By DWIG

PETEY—Looks Like the Same Wave to Us

By C. A. Voight



THE CLANCY KIDS—Logic in That

By Percy L. Crosby