

SUNNY DUCROW

By HENRY ST. JOHN COOPER

THIS STARTS THE STORY

Elizabeth Ann Ducrow, known as Sunny, tells Bert Jackson that she intends to make something of herself and ride in a motorcar some day. They both work in a pickle factory. Sunny lives with her grumpy aunt on a mean street. Humping for a day in the country and having no money, Sunny and Bert slip on the street for pennies and are arrested. At the court house is Leslie Montessoro, actress. She is impressed with Sunny's originality, and brings her to Max Hemmingsway, theatre manager who gives her a small part in a revue. Bert is taken on, too. Sunny has rare merit—a born actress—while Bert's ability is a matter of opinion. Bert is a good actor, but Sunny is a real actress. On her first appearance Sunny forgets her lines, but, when she appears to the audience to be patient and "give her a chance." Her refreshingly original speaking a diamond pendant from Lord Dobrington first night. She returns the pendant. Bert outlines a plot for a new play. Sunny lends 250 pounds. Bert's son, of the music factory, and has a half interest in the business. Dobrington gets entangled with the actress to marry her. His mother appeals to Sunny to save her son from the woman. Sunny learns that "Gilly" is an ex-convict and has served nine months for shoplifting. Bert's country exposure she "Gilly" to relinquish all claim to Dobrington, and declares to him "Gilly" her betrothed. The engagement. Sunny lays before her partner, Mr. Johnson, a plan for building a factory and houses for the workpeople.

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

SATURDAY he was Farmer Barstowe again, and he tramped his fields and watched the growth of his grain and the fattening of his cattle, and interviewed his bailiff and his farm servants. Sunday he was Squire Barstowe, and set a good example to the county. He rode to church in an antique family barouche, drawn by two fat white horses. He sat with his stout, comfortable, good-natured wife in the squire's pew, which had passed to him naturally when he acquired Potshill Manor House. In fact, for three days out of seven Barstowe was a simple-minded English country gentleman, who seemed to have no interests on this wide earth save those connected with the growing of crops, the rearing of sheep and cattle and pigs, and the housing of his tenants, and the setting of a good example on Sundays, while the other four days out of the seven he was a different personage.

Barstowe of Barstowe Realms, the giant of the music-hall profession, the man who had Realms dotted all over the country—Manchester, Bradford, Hull and Liverpool, Glasgow, Newcastle and Birmingham, and at least a score of other towns; the man who had a clear knowledge and a firm grip on each separate branch of the great Realms establishments, who knew to penny the salary every artist was drawing from him, and exactly how long the contracts lasted, and what the clauses were, and was no man who knew his business better from A to Z than Barstowe on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and on the other three days he knew nothing, and, by the expression of his face, gave the suggestion that he had never heard of Harry Lauder and did not know who George Robey was.

And today was Wednesday and a gloriously fine Wednesday. "How far is Potshill?" Sunny asked. "Potshill, miss, is Potshill, three miles," the porter said. "You go straight on there, and then turn when you come to the Courtyard. And when you get there, for a mile, or maybe a mile and a half, then—"

"All right," Sunny said. She nodded to him blithely and stepped out down the road. "Law, ain't it pleasant to be in the country? When I get on a bit and get good money, I'll live in the country myself; she mused. "I'll have a little house and a garden, and keep a bee and a pig, and—ah! a hen or two, that's my mark. Does you good, doesn't it, to get away from the smoke and the row and all that? Not that London's so dusty," she added, "I seem to miss places, and it ain't whistling to me." She walked on, chatting shrilly in the lightness of her heart.

She had made the thirty-five-mile journey from London to see Barstowe and to discuss the future of her and Bert's sketch with him, but just how she was going to manage it Sunny did not know. Arthur Curlew had warned her solemnly and tragically.

"It's like this, Sunny," he said. "If you go to Potshill, you'll be in the earth and get talking to him, you're done for good and all; he'll never forgive you; he'll never look at you again nor listen to you. Potshill is sacred—sacred to crops and pigs and cows; no one ever mentions a woman's name there. I went down once and I know. Take it from me, if you go there thinking to get at him that way, you're riding for a fall, and then good-by to all your chances at Barstowe Realms. See?"

"I see," Sunny said. "But there's more ways to a house than through the front door, old dear. You leave it to me." Sunny wrinkled her brows in deep thought as she walked along. She had had no one at all to which she could approach the great Barstowe. Arthur Curlew had said, she would ride for a fall if she attempted to get at Barstowe on musical-hall matters on a day sacred to pigs, horses and cows and crops.

"Hello," she said to herself suddenly, as she stopped and looked through a gateway. A fine, old-fashioned Elizabethan house, standing far from the main road, in its spacious grounds, it was a noble-looking old house, and it bore every evidence of careful care having been taken in its upkeep. The grounds were in fine order. There was a huge lawn, dotted with winding trees, a lake in front of the house which mirrored the whole structure on its placid surface.

Stretching away to right and left Sunny could see orchards and large tracts of land, evidently under fruit and vegetable cultivation, while in the far distance were lines of farm-buildings and distant views of arable and meadow lands.

"Who's this belong to?" Sunny asked. The farm laborer to whom she addressed the question, touched his hat.

"Squire Barstowe, miss," he said. "Squire Barstowe that is? Rich gentleman, miss, and the biggest farmer hereabouts. They do say," he paused—"they do say as he has a something to do with a theatre in London."

"I've heard he has," Sunny said. "Thank you."

She waited till the old man had gone, then she pushed open a side gate and went in.

Uninvited, Sunny wandered about at her own sweet will for about half an hour, then she happened across a laborer.

"I'm just taking a look about Mr. Barstowe's grounds," she said. "Grows a wonderful lot of fruit, don't he?"

"Yes, miss; wonderful the man said. 'Curlew's and rasherberries and like that. I suppose—tons of 'em, eh?'" Sunny asked.

"Yes, miss; wonderful fine croppees, Mr. Barstowe has got, and he looks after the soil, too. They say it takes Kent to grow strawberries, but you should see ours in the season. And then the plums, too—'t's a wonderful year for plums, miss. I'll show you."

He took her round, and Sunny saw a great deal. The man spoke truly. Barstowe evidently knew a great deal about fruit culture.

"What does he do with it?" she asked. "Markets it, miss; sends it in 'savin' Garden, what we call 'soft locally,'" she said. Sunny said thoughtfully, "But does it pay him?"

"I expect it does," he said. "But of course there's a lot of waste, and sometimes, when fruit ain't selling well in the market, he don't see much profit in it. Take them plums, there's going to be a glut of plums, they say, this year, so we shan't make next to nothing on them."

Sunny nodded. "How many plums would you say you have?"

" reckon not fur short of three to four tons," he said. "Mr. Barstowe got a wonderful belief in plums; he then then apples, all the best sorts, too—Cox's Orange Pippin and Blenheim—while the cookers."

Sunny spent another hour, at the end

of it she gave the man five shillings and set off about once more for Potshill. She had learned that Mr. Barstowe was at Potshill Market, and that he made his headquarters at the Lion and Garter. Straight to the Lion and Garter Sunny went.

The coffee-room was filled with men, farmers and farmers' sons. There was a strong flavor of the land about them; they were eating an immense lunch. Sunny ordered lunch for herself and sat at a side table, and while she ate, she watched and listened. It was not long before she spotted Barstowe sitting among the farmers. He was holding forth on the subjects of manure. The other farmers listened respectfully to his views, for he was a man who knew his business.

"Wood-ah," Barstowe was saying, "that is what I pin my faith on; it lightens the soil, and the soil's too heavy here! I used hundreds of tons of wood-ah."

He went on laying down the law and thumping the table.

"Then take poultry," he said. "You men don't understand the value of poultry. You keep half a hundred mangy chickens and allow them to run about the place. You get a few more, and you get now and again you get none when eggs are fetching their price. And you get no more than a few eggs when they are worth nothing, comparatively."

"What do you do, squire?" a man asked.

"Me? I keep four thousand fowls, and every one of 'em is kept first-class only," Barstowe went on. "I allow two hundred fowls to each acre of ground and fence 'em in; and you get a month's 'em on 'em of the ground and you get a fine lot of plums you get coming on."

"Very fine—yes, a fine lot!" Barstowe said; he looked at her suspiciously. "He knew her, of course, and waited for what he thought was coming, and he frowned again."

"And you look like getting a big crop of the rasherberries and Curlew's this year," Sunny said.

"A very big crop."

"I got talking to one of your men, and he claims about the way you marked 'em. I fancy you're wrong about that!"

"Wrong, hey? What do you know about marketing fruit crops, Miss Ducrow?"

"A bit," Sunny said. "You do, do you?"

"Oh yes," he muttered. "You do, do you?"

"What you want to do is to fix a certain price, a fair price, and see you get it."

"That's easier said than done, young lady. I have to take what the market fetches."

"There's no need," Sunny said. "Take us. We buy at a fair fixed price, but the trouble with us is to get the fruit good and dry and fresh."

"Who are you?" he asked sharply.

"I'm Sunny Ducrow."

"I know that, but you say we buy—what do you buy?"

"Fruit and vegetables for jams and pickles," she said. "I'm in the business in Johnson & Ducrow—the John Crow Jams, you know."

"John Crow—I know the name!"

"You ought to," she said. "It smacks you in the eye on every boarding. We're out, she went on, "to do the finest and the best in pickles and jams and sauces for the country. We sell the best and the purest, and we want to buy the best we can get at a fair price. It would pay you better to sell your crows direct to us at a fixed price than to stock the markets."

Barstowe put his elbows on the table; he was filled with wonder, but he said nothing. This girl, he thought she had come to poster him with musical-hall affairs. He remembered the trick she had played on him in his car that day when she was going to him through the crowded streets of London. But this talk of pickles and jams and standing crows was more to his mind.

"Well, what are your ideas?" he asked.

"I'll tell you straight!" Sunny said. She too put her elbows on the table, and talked quickly, now and again she winked her hand.

"You see, we make a point of telling 'em all the time. You pay a penny a pound more for purity, and we guarantee purity, and when we guarantee purity, we're buying the purest sugar and the cleanest and soundest fruit in the country, and the sort of fruit we want, and we're in the market for it at a fair price."

"But your output?" he asked.

"It's growing. In a little time we are taking thirty-six acres of ground and putting up a model factory where the public will be invited to come and look round and see how everything is done. It's got to be all fair and above-board. We're going to advertise it and give nice pictures of the factory and the girls' club and the swimming-baths and like that, and if you like, we'll put in a picture or two showing the great orchards on Squire Barstowe's estates at Potshill, which supply some of the fruit used by us."

"You're very young to be interested in such a business," Barstowe said.

"Nothing like starting early!" Sunny said. "I'd like to take another look round them orchards."

"So you shall," he said. He was interested. No one listening to him would have guessed for a moment that Barstowe had any connection with the music-hall world, or that Sunny was writing scenes in life that were worth in the production of pickles and jams.

At four o'clock that afternoon, when Barstowe's business at the market was over, he drove back to the Manor House and Sunny drove with him.

"It's a good idea that," he said—"a very good idea. I had thought of some thing of the sort myself, but I'm a busy man. My time during the week is occupied, the two days a week I can spare to the work here are very much filled. During the rest of the week—"

"You've got something to do with the music-hall world, haven't you?" Sunny asked.

He looked at her and grinned.

"I thought I knew your name," she said. "However, that don't matter now. We'll get talking about them plums and cherries and curries and—"

Sunny fell faintly tired out when Barstowe had conducted her round the orchards and fruit-growing place again. It was growing late too—nearly seven— and Sunny realized that she had, undoubtedly struck some good business for the jam factory, she was as yet as far off as ever from her and Bert's sketch.

"This new factory scheme of yours?" Barstowe said. "Is it in operation yet?"

"Not quite yet, but it's going to be. I'm going to let some of my friends come in and take a share," Sunny said. "You see, we'll want a bit of money that we've got. We're doing big grand business now in 'outway' street, but the place isn't big enough, and not that picture, it is not the sort of place I want. I want a show place you can make pictures of and get the newspaper people to come down and see."

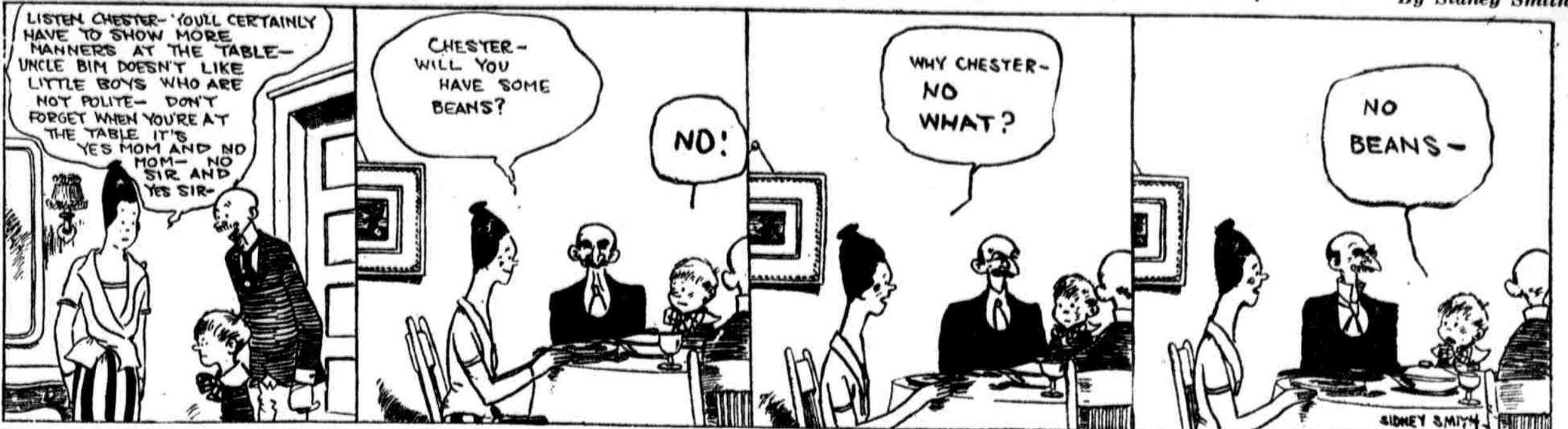
He nodded. "And—the shares?"

"I said. 'What money will you be asking for?'"

"About twelve thousand," Sunny said. "And that's for buying the land, freehold and putting up the buildings. We're making the goods all the time and advertising 'em now."

THE GUMPS—Chester Bim Gump, Aren't You Ashamed?

By Sidney Smith



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Boy, Page a Reformer!

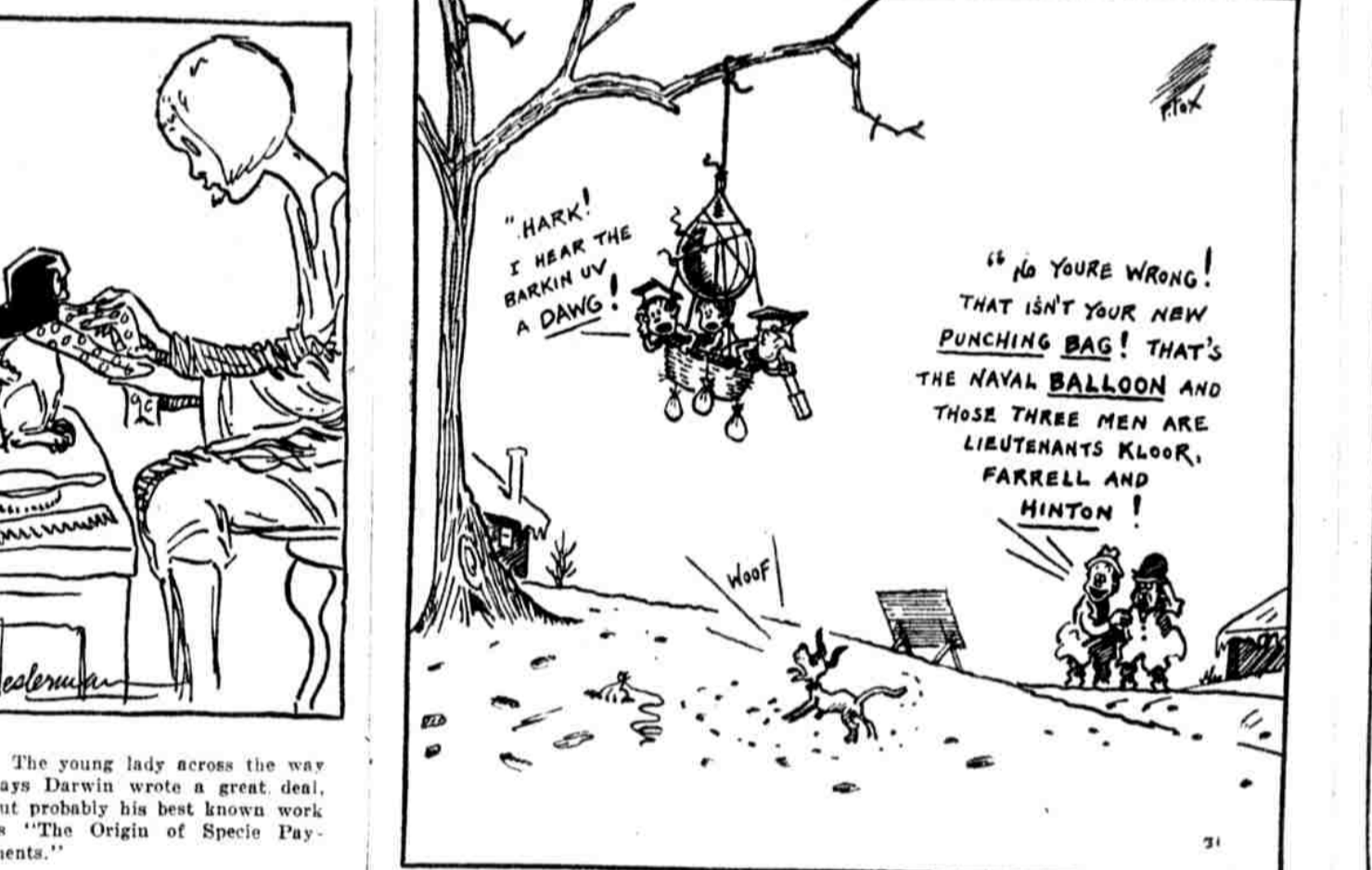
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By Hayward



LATE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON CAM WENT SKATING. SHE WORE SOCKS! SOCKS WITH LITTLE TICKLY FUR EDGES ON 'EM—AND LISTEN—WE FOUND OUT—WE FOUND OUT—SHE HAS GOT DIMPLES IN HER KNEES JUST AS SADIE SIMPSON SAID SHE HAD! OLD MAN JOES WHO WAS SAWING A LOG TO BUILD A FIRE MUST HAVE SEEN 'EM TOO FOR HE KEPT RIGHT ON SAWING. ALTOGETHER IT WAS A SUCCESSFUL DAY. AT THE EXTREM LEFT YOU SEE A BEVY OF NEGLECTED BEAUTIES. FOUR MEN

The Young Lady Across the Way About to Land After a 925-Mile Trip to the Frozen North By Fontaine Fox SCHOOL DAYS By DWI.



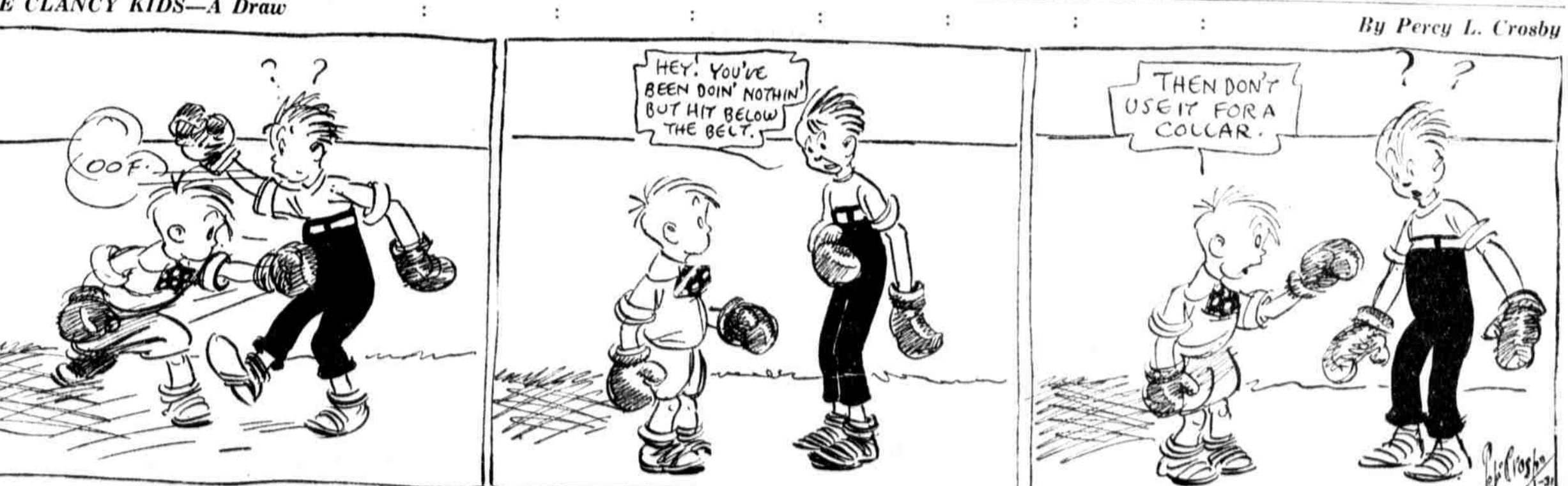
PETEY—A Great Help

By C. A. Voight



THE CLANCY KIDS—A Draw

By Percy L. Crosby



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