LADYFINGERS

By JACKSON GREGORY

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THIS STARTS THE STORY

[illegible]

AND HERE IT CONTINUES

[illegible]

that there could be no doubt that that joyous thing floating above the fields was a lark, a meadow lark, to be sure, but [illegible] its morning song in liquid notes, full-throatedly; that God must be in his heaven since certainly all was right with the world down here.

CHAPTER IX

The Tale of Old Man Beeson

Old man Beeson, the most hoary of all the many retainers in the service of Rachel Stetheril, nowadays did little more than talk and smoke his corncob pipe and draw his monthly pay. More than anything else did he love to sit at the [illegible] of his cabin down in the [illegible], where it was discreetly hidden by the [illegible] from the Big House, but where it stood forth boldly to the winding country road, and talk.

He had long ago come to that point where [illegible], though he sit in the sun of today, [illegible] is living under the stars of yesterday. He had no concern with present politics, weather, or crops. He told you either of the election of Garfield, the rains of '61 or the corn that used to grow eight feet yonder where you see that pesky [illegible]. And he told you most eagerly * * * for here was a topic upon which old man Beeson had no one left to gainsay him, no [illegible] statistics to argue against him * * * of the girlhood of Rachel Stetheril.

Old man Beeson never wore a hat and never lost his hair. But his hair grew white, his eyes weren't much use to him after late afternoon, his ears brought him word of the great world in a muffled undertone, his mind wandered. Still, he told a circumstantial tale * * * or rather the story told itself, grown automatic through countless repetitions, sounding faint in his own ears.

"Close to eighty year, is she? Pooh! What's that? Ain't I close on to a hundred? Why, I remember" * * *

[illegible], his voice trembling a little just as his uplifted hand shook, he [illegible] swiftly until he had made sure that he had his listener "hooked." Then he staged his scenes with deliberate [illegible], arranged his climaxes, builded his mysteries, lingered over his dramatic pauses.

For every year which life added to his score it would seem that old man Beeson went a year farther back into the life that had been. Now had he reached the year 1857 when an English merchant named George Stetheril came [illegible] with three ships like Columbus to the new world. But George Stetheril came into California and for the most part stayed there, becoming a part of the country, marrying the daughter of a [illegible] old Spaniard, building the basement and first story of the Stetheril wealth. With him had come a boy named Willie Beeson.

"Grand folks they was in England, too," old man Beeson had come to tell * * * although there were those who could remember that some twenty years ago he had not gone so far as this in [illegible]; indeed, old man Warner, who claimed to be as old as Beeson himself and who upon all possible opportunities called his rival an old fool, maintained that George Stetheril had been the son of a poor and unimportant country squire. * * * "Grand folks," Beeson would [illegible], wagging his head!

"Such as didn't turn a hair at a quiet game of [illegible] with a dook nor yet a mug of ale with a earl. Yes, sir; when George Stetheril was a man gone thirty and I was an upstandin' lad of ten, we come across the ocean and here we be ever since in California, George until he died, me until this very minute."

Old man Warner had been in the valley for forty years. Upon any matter which had occurred during that time in the Stetheril [illegible] he served as an eager [illegible] of old man Beeson's tale. But [illegible] antedating his coming to Lockworth he was, perforce, [illegible] tongue-tied, and here old man Beeson went as far as he liked.

If you took Beeson's word for it * * * and it was either be satisfied with it or construct an entirely imaginary history for yourself since no man ever came into the valley sufficiently [illegible] to interrogate the only other person upon [illegible] to speak upon it * * * Rachel Stetheril once upon a time had been a [illegible]. The thing sounded in- [illegible] doubted if old man Warner ever [illegible] evidence to it; but [illegible] steadily did old man Beeson maintain it as a sort of axiomatic truth upon which the whole fabric of his legend stood. She had been a pretty girl [illegible] the statement at a [illegible], challenging him to [illegible] Warner for refutation. [illegible] had been a [illegible]. Yes, sir, [illegible] old man Beeson would [illegible] and after this, one of his dramatic pauses, "that was a right smart time ago, I do believe," he would [illegible], "it was some time before Abe Warner ever come to Lockworth. Might have been before I was born. Dunno."

[illegible] thoughtfully that even in her wild girlhood Rachel Stetheril had [illegible] when things [illegible], she could dis- [illegible] yellow jacket. [illegible] intement [illegible] looking [illegible] listener had [illegible] old voice had born [illegible] who heard it. And in- [illegible] garrulous old age, old man Beeson had perhaps less fear [illegible] had any one [illegible] length and breadth [illegible].

[illegible]. Always, [illegible] Beeson had [illegible] of this other, calling her Alice. [illegible] noted here of late that [illegible] told of Rachel's [illegible] in terming her the [illegible]. Old man Warner [illegible] and went clacking [illegible] with it, giggling [illegible], averring that [illegible] old fool had forgot what [illegible] would [illegible] time." The [illegible] Rachel, had [illegible] Rachel's [illegible]. Old [illegible] ashamed of [illegible] when only sixty [illegible].

[illegible] Alice Stetheril [illegible] importance on earth. [illegible] to be accounted [illegible] was known to be the heiress to the many millions that had rolled up in the Stetheril name; and [illegible] the great granddaughter of Alice, hence the great grandniece of Rachel herself.

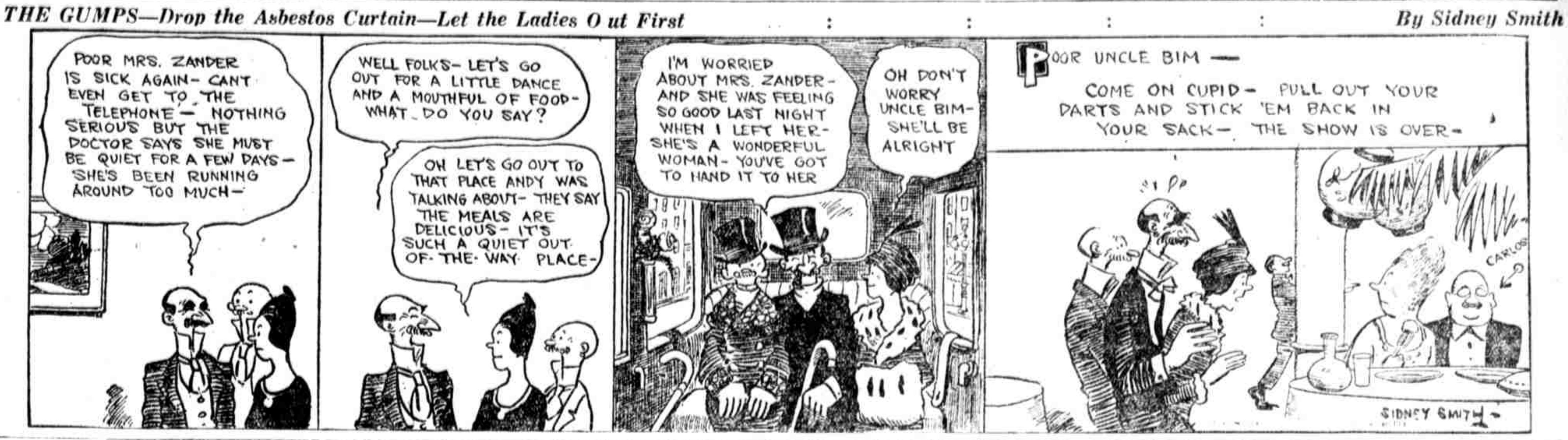
[illegible] in old man Beeson's mind because of an repeated insistence upon it, even when the mind itself was no longer clear.

Here he would pause again, suck his pipe, scratch his ear and get his "second wind." For all this was but a prologue to his tale. And then the tale itself, the tale whose telling drove old man Warner into purple, semi-[illegible] rage. For many a time had some one of the newer comers into the valley asked, "Is that so, Mr. Warner?" and he could only snap back, "[illegible]. I wasn't here then. But [illegible] it's a lie, seeing who said it." And of late it was a rare joy to be able to add, "Why, the fuddled old fool don't even rec'lect the names of the people he's trying to tell about!"

(CONTINUED TOMORROW)

[illegible] fall in love. He did know that the [illegible] was at the spring and the day at morning; that most unquestionably distant hillsides were dew-pearled;

THE GUMPS—Drop the Asbestos Curtain—Let the Ladies Out First : : : : By Sidney Smith

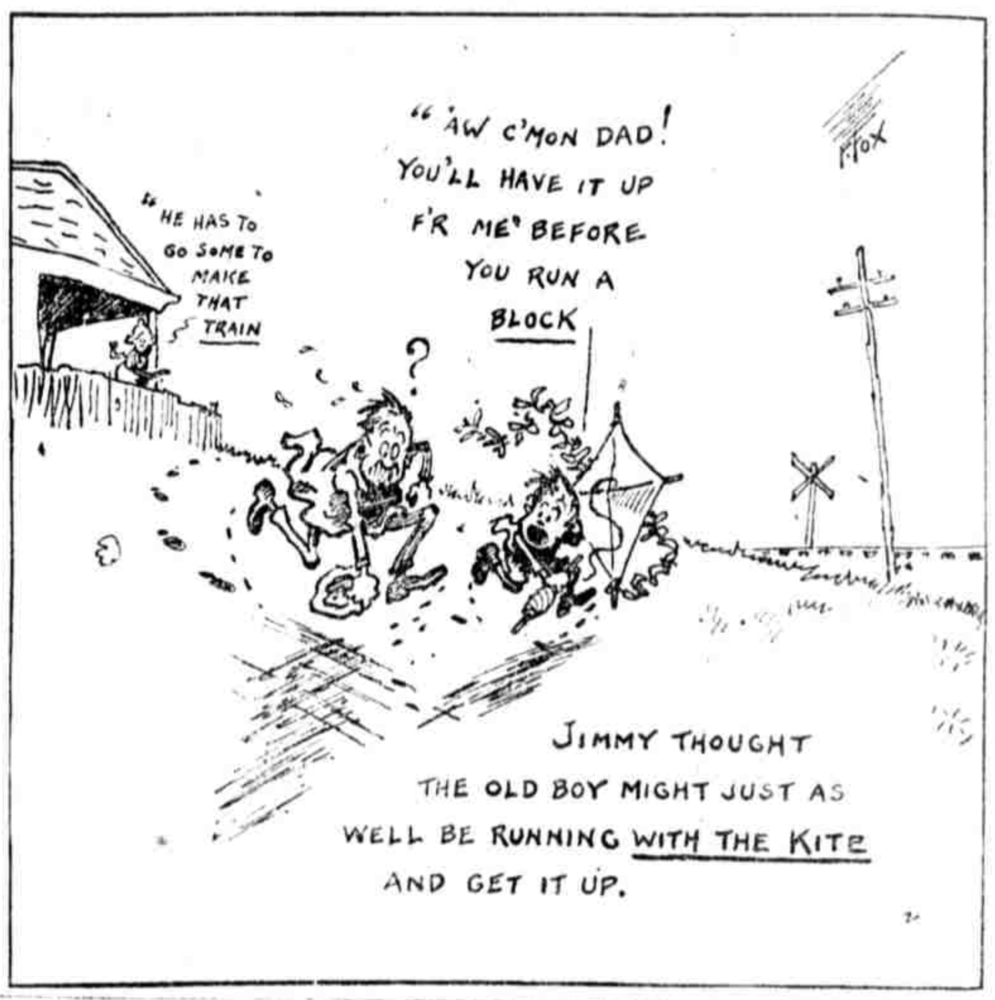


SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Why Soda Clerks Don't Last Long : : : By Hayward

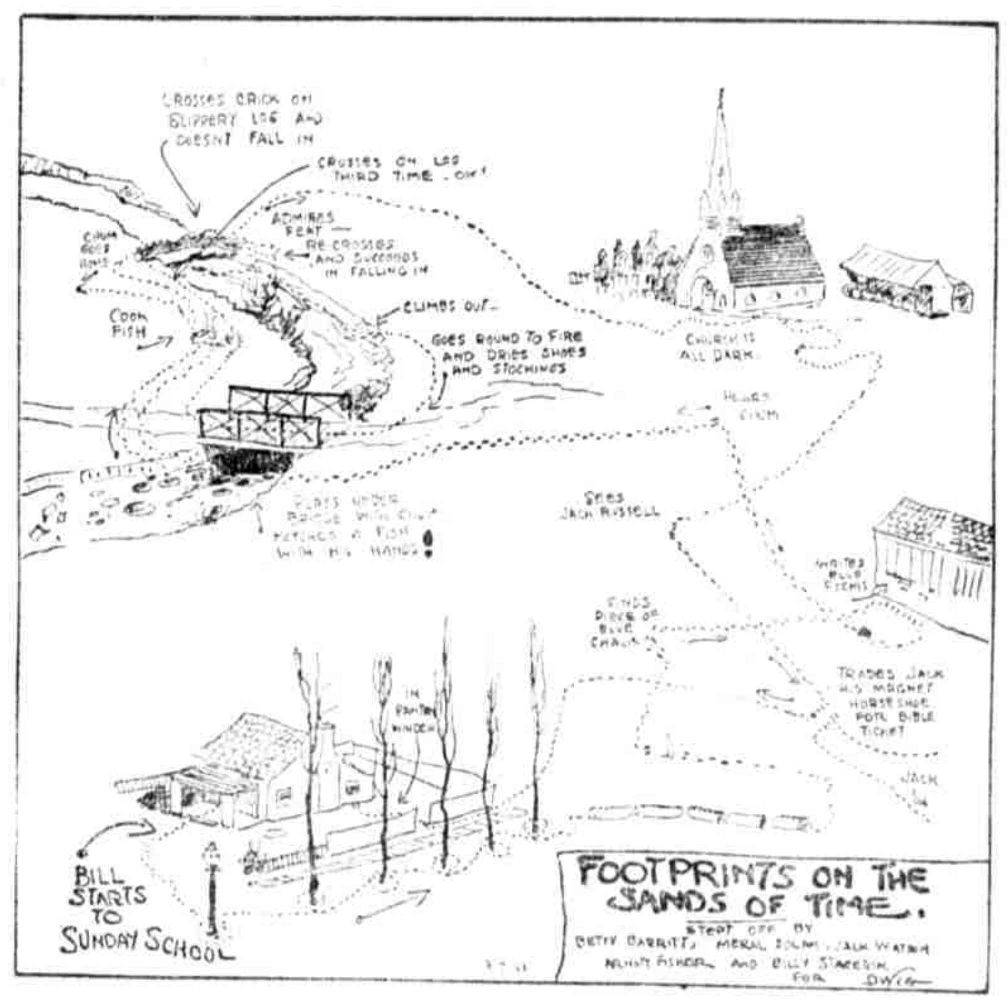
The Young Lady Across the Way

The young lady across the way says her father isn't very well and she guesses she'll run over to the pillory and get him some calomel.

As Long as His Dad Had to Run Anyhow to Make the Train -:- By FONTAINE FOX



SCHOOL DAYS -:- -:- -:- By DWIG



PETEY—The Modern Art Salesman : : : : : : By C. A. Voight

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