

HOW MANY CARDS?

By ISABEL OSTRANDER

Author of "The Island of Intrigue," "Suspense," "Ashes to Ashes," etc.
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SYNOPSIS

Raymond Timothy McCarty, a figure of an under-... narrow-shouldered man... When pulled up... the man protests he had... to do with what's in the... the real demands... what's... the best... I've been trying to get... him what he did in there...
The three enter a large room on... the floor of which lies a man in... clothes, the white waistcoat and... stained crimson... "E. C. C."
Inspector Drust... "I have not, sir." The banker shook... his head decisively. "It may have been... his, of course. A man whose home... was filled with valuable objects of art... and whose wife constituted a... huge fortune in themselves, would be... naturally supposed to guard against... burglary, but he could have had no... personal reason for such an article of self-... protection."
The sound of another motorcar out-... side and the ringing of the front door... bell put a stop for the time being to... any further questioning by the inspec-... tor, and as one of the assistants of the... chief medical examiner was ushered in... the dead man's partner turned to... McCarty.
"Are you one of those in charge... here? If so, for God's sake, take me... out of this for a while! I can't stand it!"
It was the moment for which McCarty... had been waiting.
"Come this way, sir. They'll call... you in to see me. He drew the banker... out to the hall and into the break-... fast room, where he switched on the... light once more and pulled forward a... disordered supper table. "Sit here, Mrs... Alexander, and rest yourself. I'm not... connected with the police force, if that's... what you mean; I just happened by, and... I'm a friend of the inspector. It must... have been a terrible shock to you, as... you say, to find the house deserted and... Mr. Creveling killed like this!"
The abrupt summons over the tele-... phone was starting enough, but to... lose my partner in this hideous, tragic... way!" The banker sank into the chair... and pressed his delicate blue-veined... hands over his eyes for a moment.
"I think, sir, you said that Mrs... Creveling was your niece?" McCarty... asked slyly.
Mr. Alexander's hands dropped and... he gazed at the other in a dazed fash-... ion.
"Yes. She was my late brother's... only child and my ward until her mar-... riage to Eugene eight years ago. It... will be a most—most distressing home-... coming for her. By Jove, we must write... her at once! I had forgotten— Mrs... Creveling is away?"
McCarty's ingenious blue eyes opened still... wider. "That is why, then, that the... house was all deserted."
He added the line as if to himself, but... the dazed look faded partially from... Mr. Alexander's eyes and a shade of... caution crept into them.
"Mrs. Creveling has been paying a... round of visits on Long Island for the... last few weeks and Mr. Creveling has... been living much at the club, since his... presence was required almost constantly... in town on this banking matter we... are arranging to negotiate. His ex-... planation came with nervous haste. "I... believe two or three of the servants... were left here temporarily as care-... takers, though; I cannot imagine where... they have gone. However, Mrs. Creveling... must be sent for at once!
"And what shall he say in the tele-... gram, sir?" asked McCarty as he pre-... pared to comply. "You don't want to... tell her in cold blood that her husband... has been shot, do you?"
"Heavens, no!" The little man re-... coiled. "Just explain that a serious... accident has occurred and her imme-... diate return is imperatively necessary."
"I cannot think," I confess, that I... find it almost impossible to pull myself... together. This horrible thing—"
"I understand, sir," McCarty's tone... was full of respectful sympathy, but he... crossed with his hand on the door knob.
"I wonder, now, you knowing Mr... Creveling so well, if you'd remember... whether or not he smoked his cigarette... with an amber mouthpiece?"
"An amber mouthpiece?" the other... repeated in unguarded surprise at the... petty, irrelevant question. "No, he... never used a holder of any sort. But... the telegram—"
"I'll see that it goes at once, Mr... Alexander," McCarty closed the door... behind him, and when he entered the... room where the medical examiner's... assistant was concluding his grim busi-... ness the ex-companion's face did not... betray by the flicker of an eyelid... that he had stumbled on a line, albeit... a slender one. The inspector drew him... aside at once.
"Creveling has been dead at least... four hours," he announced.
"The doctor seems to think he shot him-... self, although he wants an autopsy for... form's sake, and it's just as well. We'll... let it go at that for a day or two... any way, till we've something to... spring on the old man. Where's Alex-... ander?"
"In the next room. He wants a... telegram sent at once to Mrs. Creveling."
It seems that she's visiting a Mrs... Douglas Waverly at Broadmead, Long... Island."
McCarty rapidly detailed the sub-... stance of his brief talk with Alexander... and of the message to be sent and one... of the detectives was dispatched to the... nearest telegraph office. The medical... examiner's assistant also took his de-... parture after arranging for the removal... of the body for a formal autopsy and the... inspector and McCarty returned to the... breakfast room.
"Mr. Alexander," Inspector Drust... recommenced his interrogation without... any preamble. "My friend here says... that you told him Mrs. Creveling had... been visiting on Long Island for sev-... eral weeks and her husband living at... the club. Was he to the habit of re-... turning here to his home to give mid-... night suppers when it was virtually... closed and the staff of servants away?"
George Alexander, whom they had... found staring by the table, frowningly... contemplating the debris of the supper... turned and faced them at the ques-... tion and its implication.
"I know little of my late partner's... habits," he replied slyly. "In our... banking business we deal with many... foreign powers among the representa-... tives of which we each have our own es-... sential clients, and not until all the pre-... liminary negotiations have been con-... cluded do we have a general conference... Mr. Creveling and I are known to have... arranged several international loans of... confidential nature—you know how... such affairs creep out through the un-... derground channels of diplomacy, and... it is quite probable that he may have... brought a prospective client here to-... night rather than to a restaurant or... club in order to insure privacy. Is it... not at least probable also that after the... departure of his guest he may have... been attacked by burglar? You gentle-... men of the police know that many an... array pinned is now in the hands of a... member of what I believe you term the... "underworld."

AND HERE IT CONTINUES
BANKER'S... I've been poking... great disdain. "I've been poking... around the rooms upstairs and some of... them small yet of perfume; Pete must... have heard me closing a door up there... and he heard anything at all... I wonder you and the boys wouldn't... look on the job and do something before... the papers get hold of this, and you have... a jangling mob of reporters storming... the house."
"It's up to the inspector," retorted... Clancy sullenly. Then his tone changed.
"There's a bell ringing somewhere!"
Inspector Drust had turned sharply... and the two detectives glanced at each... other. There was silence for a moment... and then the subdued but insistent peal... was repeated.
"You answer it, Mac," the inspector... ordered. "Try the front entrance door... first. The medical examiner or one of... his assistants wouldn't have had time to... get here, and it's 5 o'clock in the morn-... ing."
McCarty crossed the wide rotunda... and as he flung open the front door... the bell rang once more through the... silent house.
A middle aged gentleman, small but... erect and dapper despite the evident... haste with which he had clothed him-... self, stood facing on the threshold.
"Who are you?" he demanded per-... emptorily. "What is the meaning of... this? Where is Mr. Creveling, and why... have you summoned from my seat at... this untimely hour? I insist upon an... explanation—"
"Just a moment, sir," the inspector... had followed McCarty and the latter... stood aside. "I am afraid that before... you get your explanation I must ask... you who you are, and what you want... of me. I am from police head-... quarters."
The little man shrank back against... his Vandike beard, his eyes wide and... gray, waggled in outraged amazement... as McCarty shut the massive double... doors behind him.
"What on earth has Eugene—? I demand to see... Mr. Creveling at once!"
"I am afraid that is impossible,"... Inspector Drust replied smoothly. "Will... you answer my question, please? What... brings you here at what you yourself... have admitted is an unusual hour?"
"Clancy!" the newcomer exclaim-... ed. "This with an obvious effort to... defend himself and responded in digni-... fied resentment.
"I am George Alexander, Mr. Creveling's... banking partner and the uncle and... former guardian of Mrs. Creveling... that should be sufficient answer to you... Mr. Will you inform me why I have... been summoned here?"
"Who sent for you, Mr. Alexander?"... "Who told you to come here?" The inspec-... tor's tone was deferential, but it... held a gate of unmistakable sternness.
"That is a point upon which I should... like to be informed," retorted the other.
"I played my usual rubber of bridge... at the club, went to my rooms and re-... turned at eleven. A few minutes ago I... was aroused by my telephone and told... that I was urgently needed here at... five further information, so I dressed and... came."
"Do you recognize the voice over the... phone?"
Mr. Alexander paused thoughtfully... and then replied with hesitation.
"No. It was that of a man of course, but... when I demanded my informant's iden-... tity he hung up the receiver. I am... quite sure I have never heard it before."

CHAPTER III
Inquiries
THE inspector turned involuntarily... and glanced at his subordinate, but... McCarty's face was blandly inscrutable.
"Mr. Alexander," began Inspector... Drust, "your informant was unauthor-... ized to give you any information, and we... do not know his name, but your presence here... certainly—supposing circumstances... the details of which you will... know the morning of the hours of two and... three of this date. The regular offi-... cial is to be relieved, although a visit... card was spread out on the breakfast... table. In the study, or in the study, lies... the body of a man in evening clothes, identified as that of Mr. Creveling."
"Eugene—?" the banker gasped.
"Possibly," the inspector replied.
"Good God, I cannot be-... lieve it! Why, only yesterday we had... a long conference of the thing? But... I should have done this thing?"
"The pistol—an army .45—lies with... the inspector," replied the... "You mean to insinuate that he killed... the woman?" Mr. Alexander bristled, but... the light spring over him more within... that reason could he have for such an... act? His affairs were never in better... shape; the conference at the office yes-... terday was in regard to a large loan we... have brought in, which would... returns and is highly advantageous... troubles, no arrangements of any... kind."
"Come and see him for yourself,"... the inspector urged and led the way... to the study, with Mr. Alexander fol-... lowing. As they entered Clancy and the... two detectives stepped aside, exposing... the door, and with a shocked exclaima-... tion the banker recoiled.
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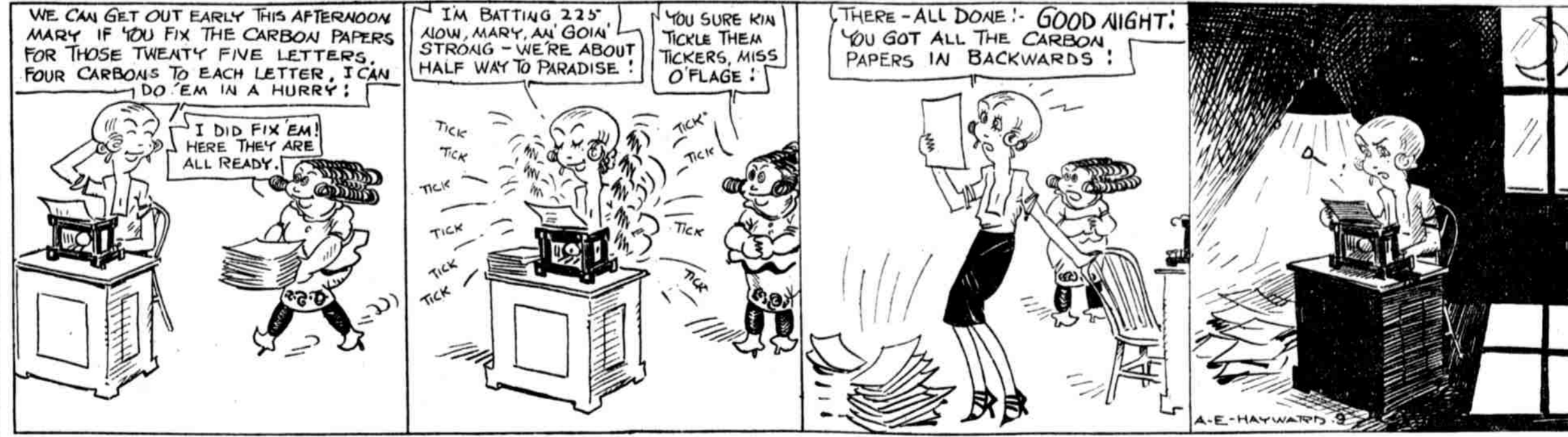
THE GUMPS—It Grows Lighter Each Day for Andy

By Sidney Smith



SOMEBODY'S STENOG—And They Don't Speak

By Hayward



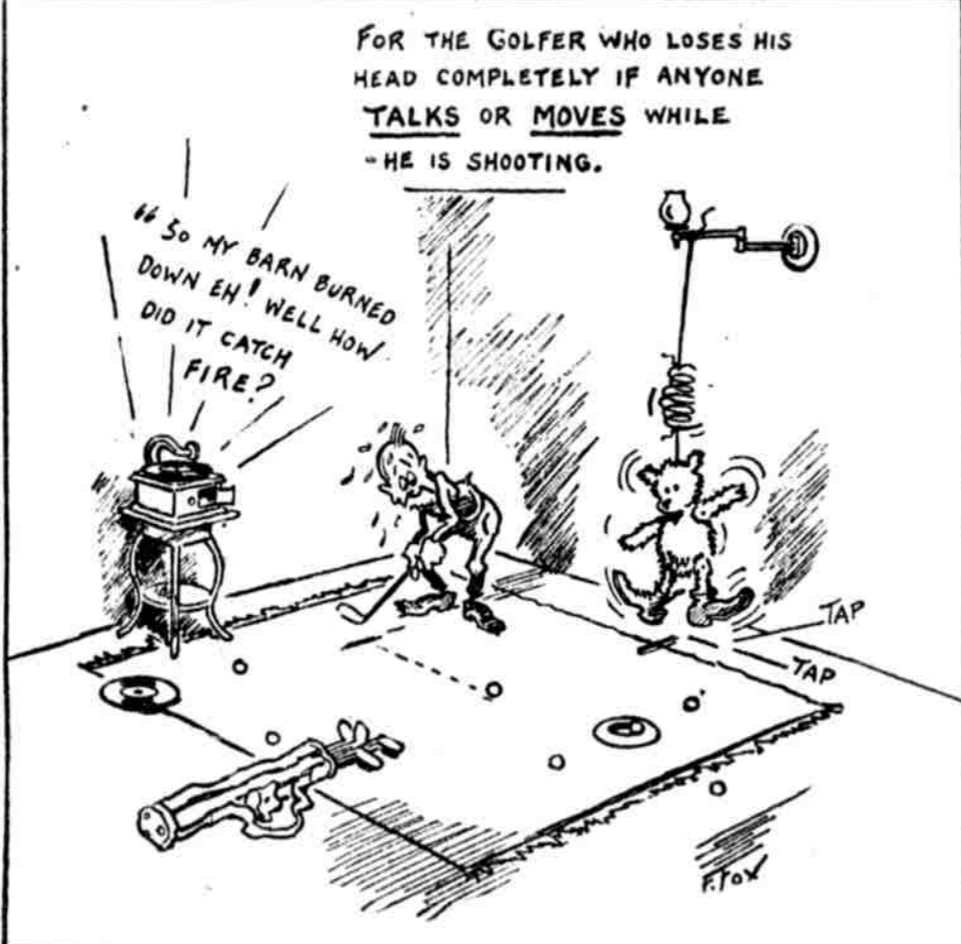
The Young Lady Across the Way

INDOOR PUTTING PRACTICE

By FONTAINE FOX

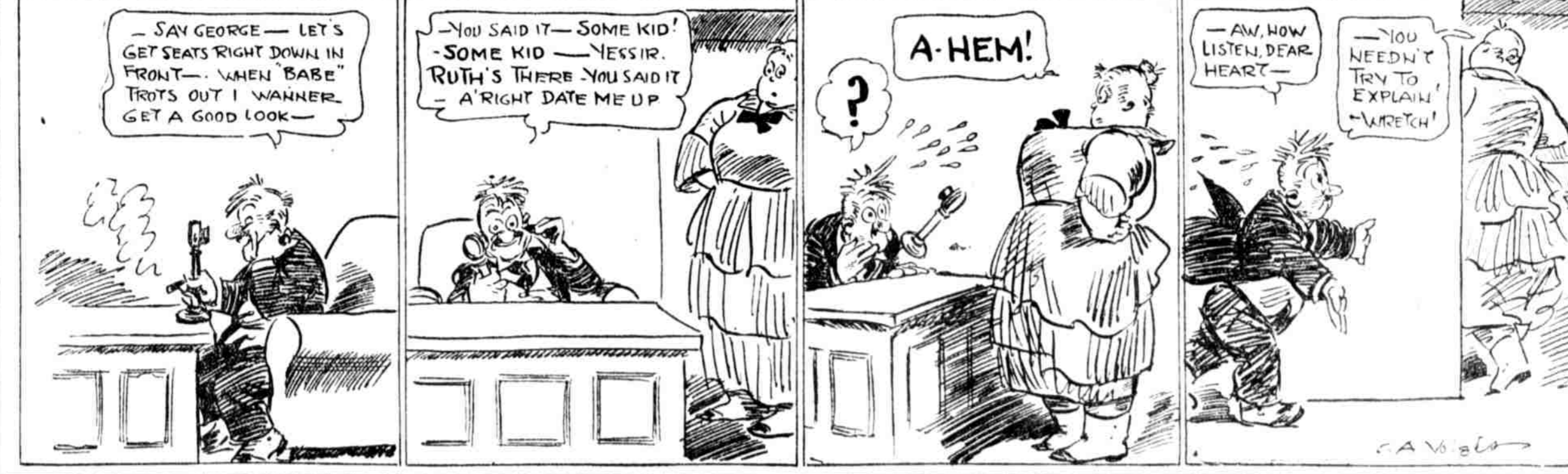
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By DWIG



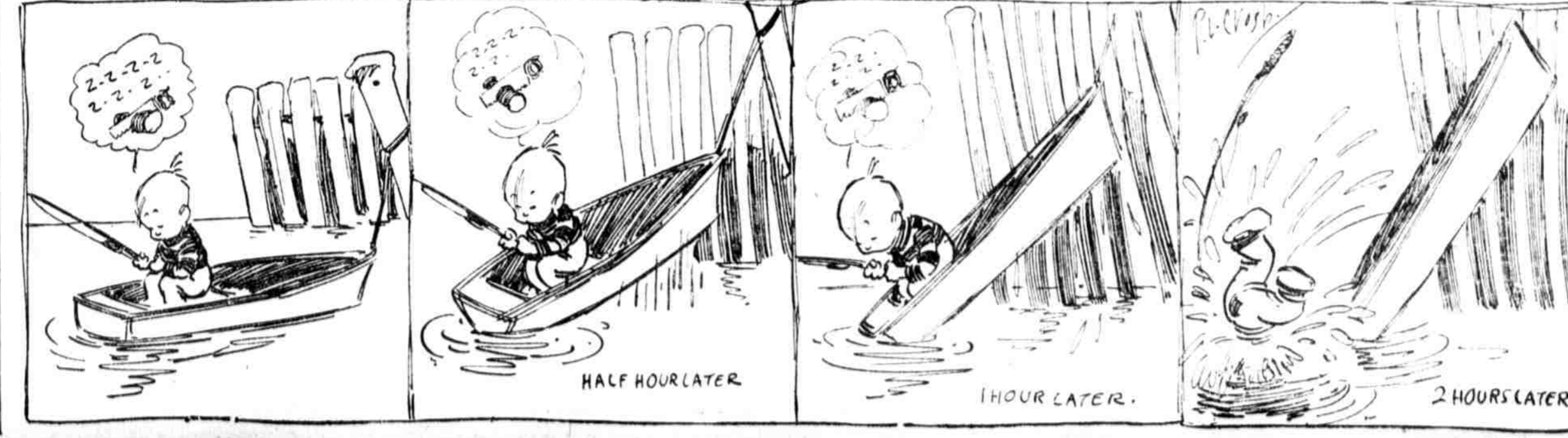
PETEY—It Looks Like a Home Run for Henrietta

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THE CLANCY KIDS—When the Tide Turned So Did Timmie

By Percy L. Crosby



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