

By Sidney Smith

HOW MANY CARDS?

By ISABEL OSTRANDER

Author of "The Island of Iniquity," "Suspense," "Ashes to Ashes," etc. Copyright, 1921, by Robert M. Merrick & Co.

"It's like a bear with a sore head. Somebody has been poking a nose into my private affairs and I've never been in such a rage. I had my work cut out for me to make him realize that tonight and extend a glad invitation to our friends of the police department. He promised finally that he would come."

"Who are the other two McCarty?" "Who besides Inspector Druet?" "Cutter. It wouldn't surprise me to see the district attorney."

"Nothing like that!" O'Rourke said. "He didn't say, but I think he safely leaves the personnel of the party to his discretion. There they are, as usual."

"The thud of the knocker had rattled in their ears through the door and Cutter rose without a word and led the men-folks into the yard. He juttied out into the yard, a apartment was a familiar one to him and he stood a little to one side, covering with servant threw open the door and admitted the visitors."

"It is a pleasure, Mr. McCarty," Cutter advanced to the door. "The arrival of you and your hand, the other day that you were called on our national indoor game would have gladly extended an invitation to you to join us any time. We are quite frequently amused at the audacity of his host, but turned with grave dignity to present his companions."

"This is Inspector Druet, Mr. McCarty, and an old friend of mine, Dennis Riordan, who is not connected with the force. Mr. Terhune I'm making you know."

"We have met," Mr. Cutter acknowledged somewhat wryly as he shook hands. "I am glad to welcome gentlemen; you know Mr. Riordan, I think."

"McCarty drew the latter gentleman under cover of the general conversation which immediately followed and asked:

"Where is Mr. Waverly?" "He is promised to be here, and I expect him any minute." O'Rourke asked at the other quizzically. "Say, do you know anything about what made him so angry today?" "McCarty replied:

"I thought he'd have a fit! You know me over the phone that he would be in a bad humor, you know, and I thought you must be at the bottom of it. I don't mind telling you, Timmie, that Cutter doesn't half like the idea of this little party tonight; he is afraid you are up to some trick, but I assured him that you wouldn't try anything of that sort on a friend of mine."

"There was a rising inflection in his voice as though he were asking a question and McCarty responded to it promptly:

"It's a trick, in a way, sir, and I'm bound to admit it, but it has nothing to do with the games that's been going on here. It's a more serious matter, entirely, and this was the only way to come at the truth."

"A more serious matter?" "Waverly repeated. "Good God, you mean anything to do with Creveling's death?" "McCarty nodded slowly.

"I'm telling you this in strict confidence, sir, not only because it's your case since you helped us arrange this little party, but because I want you to sit tight and say or do nothing no matter what anybody says. You'll realize that we've a purpose behind it all and what we can explain more fully. He seemed and added in a still lower but most impressive tone: "You see, we know who killed Mr. Creveling, but we don't know why. Waverly does, and it's the last link we need in the chain to get the truth out of him even if it takes a hell of a scare to make him come around. You understand?" "Yes, I think I do, Timmie, but was it necessary to drag up all this?" "Waverly's infinite reproach and chagrin in O'Rourke's tones.

"This to keep you all out of anything further that I've asked you to be sure to do," McCarty said. "Waverly'll get the scare here, but he'll be explaining afterward, in private, and it'll let the rest out that's been kept in my promise to you and doing whatever's in my power to prevent trouble from coming to all of you."

"Evening, everybody. Have I kept you waiting?" "They all looked to one accord to the door, to find Douglas Waverly standing on the threshold. He appeared composed and tried to smile, but a faint, motioned faintly, as though upon his flabby countenance and the veins on his forehead stood out like wildflowers. Nodding with cool assurance to McCarty he acknowledged the introduction to the others, civilly enough and turned to the haize-covered table where Cutter had already seated himself and was busily engaged in stacking up the ivory chips.

"The latter looked up with a smile of welcome which quickly changed to a look of concern.

"Hello, Doug! Anything the matter? You look a little seedy. You're not ill, are you?" "Waverly shook his head, but one hand went to the left breast of his shirt front.

"Just a touch of the old trouble, but I've been giving me some rotten twinges today," he admitted. "I'll be right as course; I've been running the old engine too long on high, I expect, what's the limit tonight? We'll have a pike, I suppose."

"Sit beside me, sir, on my left," McCarty said in a hurried undertone to O'Rourke as they all moved toward the table.

"The latter glanced at him in surprise, but obeyed without comment, his eyes wandering to the others as they reached their places. Dennis Riordan seated himself on Cutter's left and Inspector Druet on McCarty's right, leaving the only vacant chair between himself and the criminologist. Waverly looked about him, shrugged, pulling out the chair, dropped into it, and as he did so his face twitched for a moment and his hand went again to his breast.

"Ten-dollar limit, gentlemen," Cutter raised his eyes. "Is that agreed?" "Dennis shot an agonized glance at McCarty, but with an answering smile which made him quail and add a hurried assent to those of the rest. "O'Rourke began, it went slowly at first, on three questions, two of which had opened.

"McCarty eyed Waverly curiously as he fumbled clumsily with the cards in dealing; the fat man was breathing heavily and his voice had become thicker than on their first meeting. Had he fortified himself for the evening by an overindulgent inebriation into his private stock, or was he in-

King Cophetua Over Again

Wealthy man falls in love with pretty girl and she falls in love with him; not knowing he is wealthy.

She visualizes the snug little nest she is going to make for him; how they will work together and live for each other.

When she learns at last that he is rich she is disappointed.

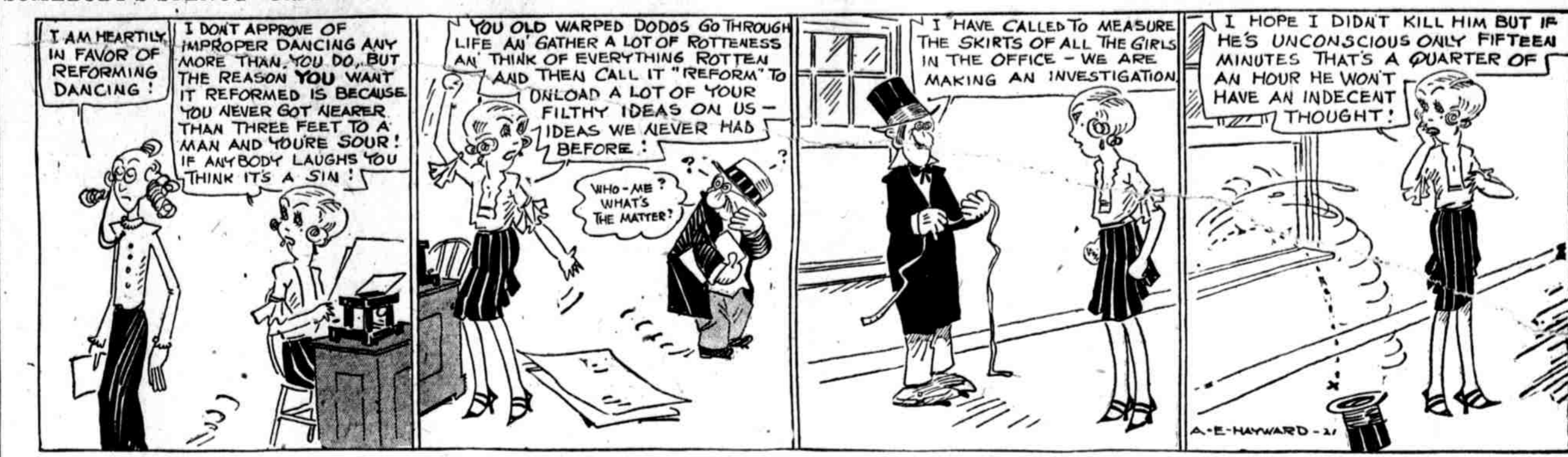
Will she get over that feeling? Ruby Ayres, in her story, "The Winds of the World," which begins on this page on Monday, tells of just such an incident.

BUT HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT IT?

THE GUMPS—Mother Nature's Little Pal, Andy



SOMEBODY'S STENOGRAPHER—Old Blue Face Gets a Push



... boring still under the agitation of which O'Rourke had spoken?

As he laid down the pack to take up his hand the door behind them opened once more and a high-pitched, right laughter came to their ears with a little hysterical note running through it.

"That stupid Gregory tried to keep me out!" Mr. Blue Face cried. "I was in an evening gown which displayed her full-blown form to perfection, paused in seeming confusion on the threshold."

"Mr. Kip!" Cutter left his place as the others rose and advanced quickly toward her. "This is an unexpected pleasure; I—we—you—see—"

"Mrs. Kip!" Cutter left his place as the others rose and advanced quickly toward her. "This is an unexpected pleasure; I—we—you—see—"

"Good evening, Mrs. Kip. You've not forgotten me?" "She laid an icy hand in his for a moment. "I had no idea that you were a friend of Mr. Cutter's, nor that I was intruding upon a stag affair. I understood that Mr. Waverly would be here this evening and I fancied that some of the other ladies were coming."

"Won't you stay, anyway?" Cutter drew away from O'Rourke and flashed a strange glance at McCarty, who returned it with an almost imperceptible nod. "This is quite an impromptu affair we should have telephoned to you and Mrs. O'Rourke and the rest, but it really doesn't matter. Choose one of us to chaperone you, and join us, do."

"We'll," Mrs. Kip flushed and dropped her eyes. "I wouldn't think of intruding in the game, but if you are quite sure I shall not be in the way, I might be persuaded to look on for a little while. I know it is horribly unconventional, but I was bored to tears at home."

She came slowly forward and Cutter presented Terhune, the inspector and Dennis Riordan in turn. McCarty observed that after greeting the criminologist her eyes passed swiftly to those of the inspector as though seeming not to see the man who stood between, and she turned with unmistakable relief to bow to Dennis, who was gazing at her in fatuous admiration.

O'Rourke, at a gesture from McCarty, had drawn a chair up behind his own and to the right of that of the fireman, and he patted it invitingly.

"Come and give me luck, Mrs. Kip," he begged. "I won the first pot, but that was because you were already almost here. I am convinced of it!"

Mrs. Kip smiled in acquiescence and made a laughing rejoinder, but she seated herself with obvious reluctance, for she was directly across the table from Waverly and could no longer attempt to avoid the gaze he bent upon her. It was a curious mingling of warning and questioning and before it her color ebbed, but she held her head high.

The rest seated themselves and the game resumed. All passed until Dennis was reached, when that individual suddenly became galvanized into life and opened for three dollars. Cutter stayed, and Inspector Druet and O'Rourke, but the rest dropped and McCarty sat back in his chair, studying the faces about the table.

O'Rourke seemed intent upon his cards. Mrs. Kip was looking down at her tightly locked fingers, Dennis was preoccupied and Cutter inscrutable; Terhune, too, leaned back with a dejected, slightly bored air. Waverly chewed sullenly upon his unlighted cigar and Inspector Druet moved restlessly in his chair, while over all of them a nameless suspense brooded, a tenacity as of relentless hands tightening about them.

It was slightly lessened when Dennis with naive glee raised in the pot on a bluff and proudly displayed his opening pair of aces.

"Gad, I'm thirsty!" Waverly ran a fat finger around his collar as though it were choking him. "Tell Gregory to get some more, will you, old man?" The man-servant was at his elbow in an instant with a slender crystal carafe and glass upon a mirror-lined tray, and then as he picked up the cards to deal, Waverly drank deep and cleared his throat, but his voice seemed thicker than ever as he addressed a remark to their host.

McCarty looked down at the cards in Inspector Druet's hands.

"Odd design, aren't they?" Cutter had followed his gaze from across the table. "They were made especially for me in Austria some years ago, and I laid in a good supply. I must have a hundred or more fresh packs identical to these lying around the house."

"I've never seen any just like them," McCarty studied the grotesque pattern picked out in green and purple and gold upon the backs of those held in his hand, and then raised his eyes to Cutter's. "They must have cost a lot of money?" "I've forgotten. I believe I paid around twenty-five dollars a pack for them," the other responded absently. "You couldn't get them now at any price, of course."

"Think of that now!" marveled McCarty. "I lost a hundred and sixty-five dollars one night on a trip from Kansas City to Milwaukee and the deck I played with only cost fifty cents."

"If you're opening, Mac, say the word!" Dennis admonished, emboldened by his recent coup. "You're holding up the game, Dennis drew a deep, dropping her gloves and retrieved them quickly before O'Rourke could stoop for them and even Cutter stirred in his seat. The rest which for a moment had lightened descended again with almost tangible force and the hand was played out in a strained silence broken only by the monosyllabic utterances of the host.

Waverly won with a full house, but his only comment was a grunt. "The mottled flush had deepened on his face and a pulse throbed perceptibly in his temple.

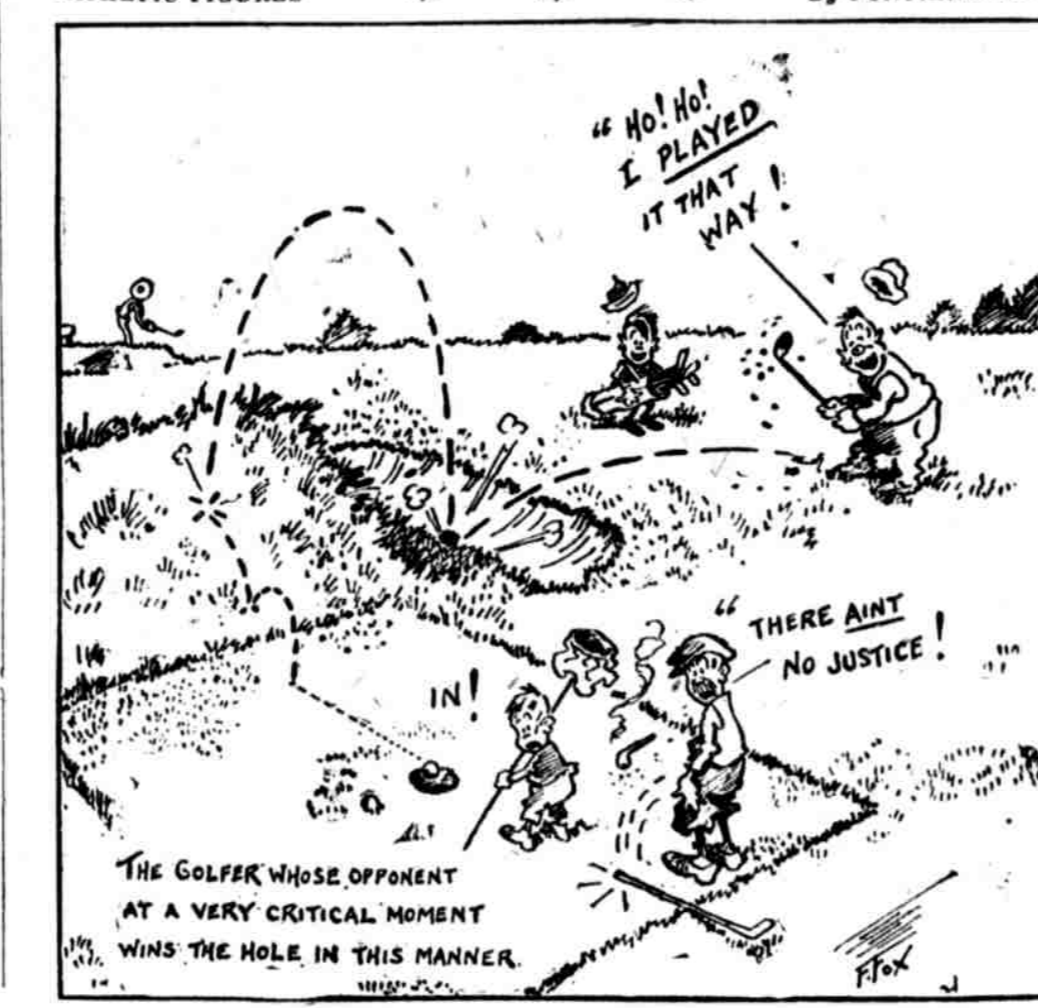
It was McCarty's deal and as he picked up the cards Dennis drew a deep, convulsive breath as one about to plunge into cold water and started a lengthy post mortem about his last hand which strangely enough seemed suddenly to interest Terhune and the inspector, also. They promptly took issue with him and as the discussion waxed one of McCarty's hands steeled in a lightning movement to his pocket and back to the deck of cards which he held just at the edge of the table.

The Young Lady Across the Way



The young lady across the way says she supposes Miss Amy Lowell is a great writer, but personally she likes poetry that rhymes and is opposed to free speech.

PATHETIC FIGURES



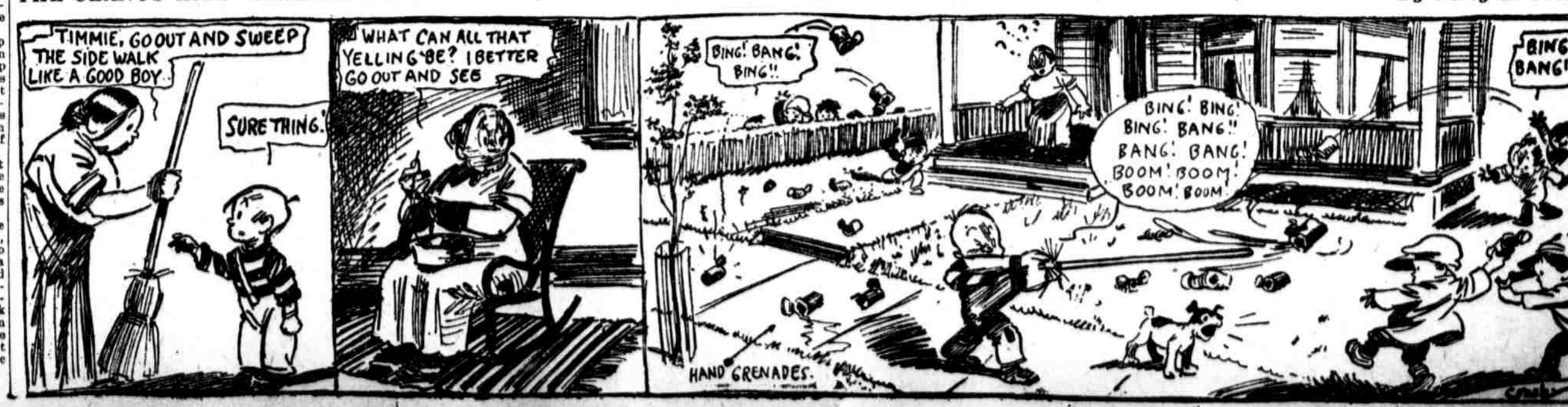
SCHOOL DAYS



PETEY—That Truth-Telling Ether



THE CLANCY KIDS—Timmie at War



CONTINUED MONDAY