

By Sidney Smith

# THE DANCING MASTER

By RUBY AYRES

Author of "The Phantom Lover," "A Bachelor Husband," "The One Unwanted," etc.

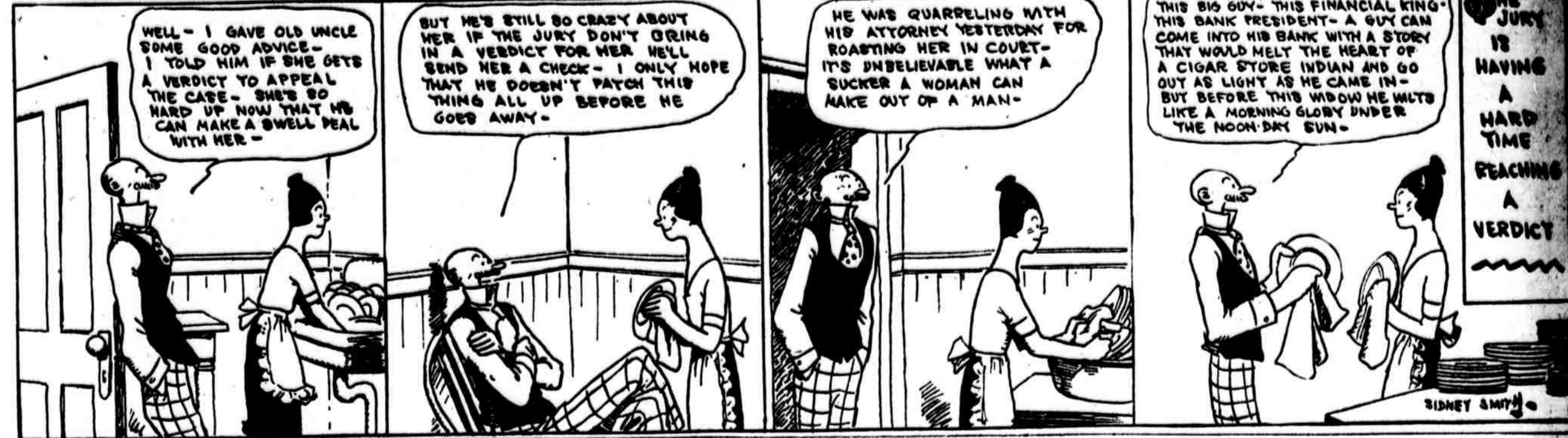
**THIS BEGINS THE STORY**  
Elizabeth Conger, a demure country girl, pretty in spite of her old-fashioned dowdy dressing, is thrown upon the grudging hospitality of her aunt and cousin in fashionable London through the death of an uncle, who leaves her with only £100, instead of an expected fortune. At a ball she is taught to dance by her hand-some cousin, a former sergeant who has taken up dance teaching. Walter Sneath, a solid but not very vicious country lad, proposes marriage to her through the hand of her dancing instructor. Elizabeth leaves her aunt's home, going to live with Nettie, Royston's assistant.

## AND HERE IT CONTINUES

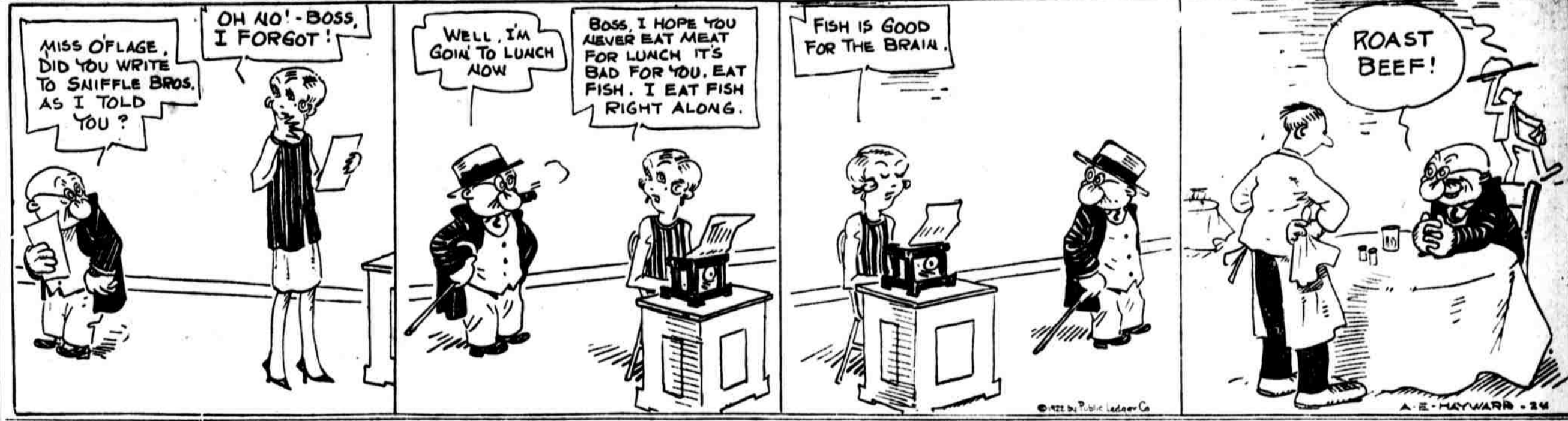
"My Dear, Every One Loves Him"  
ROYSTON hesitated; then he said gently:  
"Perhaps the best way will be for you to give me, say, twenty pounds, and then I'll promise you that I will pay myself, you know, it will last for weeks, living carefully as you will live here."  
She gave a sigh of relief.  
"I'm so glad; I thought I should not have enough."  
He took up his coat from a chair.  
"And now you must be off. I shall see you the day after tomorrow."  
"Yes—and, Mr. Royston, I wish I could thank you for being so kind to me."  
He colored.  
"Please don't! Why, how do you know that anything I may have done for you is not from an entirely selfish motive?"  
"What do you mean?"  
"I mean that you may prove to be a great dancer in the future; a second Pavlova or even greater."  
She laughed.  
"It would be too wonderful!"  
He held out his hand.  
"Well, good-by for the present."  
"Good-by," she stood listening to his step going downstairs and his voice in the narrow hall below as he called out good-night to Nettie. It rather jarred on her because she heard Nettie's cheery reply, "Good-night, old thing! See you tomorrow."  
Elizabeth was glad when she heard the front door shut and Nettie returning.  
"Well, all fixed up?" she asked cheerily, as she came into the room.  
"Yes. I'm to go with you tomorrow to buy some clothes."  
"I know. I love shopping. I'll show you all the best places. We shan't be able to go to them, of course, but it's nice to see them, all the same."  
She began to pack up the tea things.  
"I think Mr. Royston is the kindest man I've ever met," Elizabeth said.  
Nettie put two saucers together with rather an unnecessary clatter.  
"My dear, every one loves him," she answered. "All the women at least."  
"It's a pity he's married," Elizabeth said, unthinkingly.  
Nettie flushed.  
"Men all seem to make fools of themselves at some time or another," she answered, flippantly.  
Elizabeth went over to the window and stood looking out into the twilight street.  
"How much do people pay Mr. Royston for lessons?" she asked, suddenly.  
Nettie was busy scraping the jam dish.  
"Three guineas for six lessons, as a rule," she said, absently. "It's more if you want extra special attention and all the latest fandangled steps."  
"Three guineas for six lessons? Then how many lessons does it take?"  
"Does what take?"  
"I mean how many lessons should I want to be able to dance as—as well as you do, for instance?"  
Nettie looked up.  
"If you're extra smart you might do it in three dozen," she said, rather shortly. "If you're a dud, goodness only knows how many!"  
"Three dozen?" Elizabeth made a slow calculation; three dozen meant eighteen guineas. It was not going to leave much over out of the twenty pounds for clothes and to pay Mrs. Silem.  
The next three weeks passed like a dream to Elizabeth and were the happiest she had ever known. Although afterward, when she looked back on them, they seemed composed chiefly of hope and disappointments, with here and there little rays of encouragement and hope.  
Pat Royston was no longer just her friend—he was her master, relentless and determined, allowing no s'ackness in her work, always reminding her that she was at the very bottom of the ladder which she was so ambitious to climb.  
There were no wakeful nights for her now. At the end of the day she was always so tired that she fell asleep as soon as her head touched the pillow.  
"Are you sorry you started?" Nettie asked once, looking at Elizabeth's weary face with a faintly malicious smile. "I told you what it would be, you know."  
Elizabeth opened her eyes wide.  
"Sorry? Why? I've never been so happy in my life."  
Mrs. Mason had not once been near her, and neither she nor Dolly had written for all that either of them knew. Elizabeth might have been dead and buried.  
And then one day at the end of three weeks Royston called Elizabeth back as she was leaving the studio.  
"I want to speak to you if you can spare a moment," he said.  
Elizabeth turned quickly.  
"Have I slackened off again?" she asked, despondently. Unconsciously she had begun to adopt Nettie's slangy way of speaking, just as she had begun to copy her manner of dress and the way in which she did her hair.  
Royston did not answer the question; he was looking at Elizabeth with rather a sorry sort of smile.  
"Just wanted to tell you that I can teach no more," he said.  
The startled color flew to her face.  
"Not teach me any more? Oh! what do you mean? What have I done? I've tried my best; I've done everything you've told me."  
He smiled. "I know, it's not your fault; it's just that I've taught you all I know myself, and that it's time you went to some one better than I am—a professional teacher, if you understand what I mean."  
Her distressed eyes searched his face.  
"I don't know what you mean; I'd much rather stay with you. Of course, I know I can't pay what I ought to, but I've found out what your fees were for ordinary people. But if you'll let me stay I'll do anything for you. I'm shure you come, don't you think I'm a first class child?" Royston said, smiling.  
"That's just it—you're too good

for this sort of life; too clever. You'll be wasted here. It's all right for me; I can do nothing else; I know my own limitations; but you've got it in you to do better to do great things. It wouldn't be fair if I did not tell you that you must go on—that if you've got the pluck and patience I am sure you'll make a great name for yourself, and nobody will be more proud and pleased than I shall."  
The color had died slowly from her face; she stood picking nervously at the soft folds of her dress.  
"You mean you're sending me away?" she asked, faintly.  
"I mean that for your own good you must go," he answered, firmly. "There is a famous French dancer whom I have spoken to about you and she is anxious to see you and judge for herself if what I have said is the truth. If it is, she is willing to train you and bring you out—that is, of course, if you consent."  
"But—but I've got no money!"  
"That will not matter," he assured her. He did not tell her that her own small savings would have evaporated long enough ago had he used it; and it never occurred to Elizabeth that all he had done for her had been done gratuitously. He went on to explain that it was quite a usual thing for any one with undeniable talent to receive their training without payment, on condition that in the future a certain percentage of whatever money they earned was returned to the person who undertook that training.  
"If I was not sure that your future is all you can hope for, I don't look so sure," he added. "I thought you would be wild with excitement."  
"So I am, of course. I never thought..."  
She broke off, unable to put her thoughts into words; she only knew that it meant leaving Royston, the only friend she had.  
"And when—when..." she stammered.  
"I have asked Mme. Senestis to let me take you to see her in the morning. She wants to talk to you and see you dance." He paused. "Well, aren't you going to say thank you very much?" he asked.  
"Of course, only—supposing I fail?"  
"You won't fail."  
"You are very sure," Elizabeth said, sadly.  
He made no answer; he opened the door as if to dismiss her. "Then tomorrow I will take you to Mme. Senestis," he said.  
"Yes, thank you."  
She passed him with bowed head and went out of the room and downstairs.  
She knew quite well that she ought to be glad; that she ought to be beside herself with delight, and yet her feet dragged as she walked along the road and her face was sad when she got back to Mrs. Silem's and found Nettie yawning over a book and waiting supper for her.  
"Where have you been?" she asked, "and what's the matter?"  
Elizabeth told her.  
Nettie stared. "And aren't you pleased?" she demanded, truculently. "I thought you'd be out of your mind with joy. Pat told me all about it days ago. He says he believes you will make a great name for yourself." She regarded the younger girl with moody eyes. "Wish it was me," she said, bluntly.  
Elizabeth sat down to the table, her chin in her hands.  
"Are we going back to the studio tonight?" she asked, presently.  
"No; Pat said we needn't. He wants me to have a rest, as I'm dancing at that show with him tomorrow, you know."  
"Oh, yes, of course," Elizabeth hated those "shows," as Nettie called them, which were really exhibition dances given either in crowded halls or at private entertainments.  
Pat's Wife Again!  
She had always been bitterly envious because Nettie invariably partnered Royston, whereas she herself had never once been asked.  
"If he thinks I'm such a wonderful dancer why won't he take me sometimes," she thought, wistfully, when presently Nettie brought out a new frock which she was to wear for the occasion.  
"Isn't it a duck?" she asked, holding it against her slim figure to show off its beauties.  
"Sweet," said Elizabeth. "I believe it would suit me, too," she added, even though you're so dark and I'm fair."  
Nettie laughed.  
"Well, you're not going to have it, miss," she said, playfully.  
She took it away and hung it again in its wardrobe.  
"Some day, when you're famous and billed all over London in letters two or three inches high," she said, flippantly, "I shall point you out to people and say: 'I once shared digs with that girl; I taught her the very first steps she knew.'"  
"So you did; I owe a lot to you," Elizabeth said, warmly.  
"And," Nettie went on, with mock tragedy, "I shall write to you humbly and ask if you can send me a couple of upper-circle seats, and you'll wonder who on earth I am and where you have heard my name before."  
"Nettie! as if I should ever forget you!" Nettie swung around on the tip of her toe.  
"My dear, it always happens," she said lightly; "fame separates friends more effectively than anything else."  
"I am not likely to ever get what you call 'fame,'" Elizabeth answered, quickly; "not that sort of fame, anyway; don't be silly."  
Nettie laughed and went back to her chair.  
"Who do you think was here when I got home this afternoon?" she asked, abruptly.  
"I don't know," Elizabeth spoke vaguely; her thoughts were far away.  
"Pat's wife," Nettie said.  
Elizabeth turned around, her face flushing.  
"Here! Why, whatever for?"  
"I don't know; she asked for you." There was a little silence. "For me," Elizabeth echoed blankly.  
"Yes. I said you didn't live here. It was a lie, of course; but it was Pat's orders. He said he would not have his wife mixed up with you, and what he says is law, so I just lied. And she is an awful creature, Elizabeth. I hated her."  
"I've only seen her twice in my life," Elizabeth said. "She seemed kind enough then."  
"Oh, yes; that's her way. It's all put on; she's a cat really. Poor old Pat! I'd wring her neck if she was my wife."  
Elizabeth did not answer.  
But for the first time for weeks she could not sleep that night; she had so much to think about. This sudden and unexpected step up the ladder of fame had bewildered her, and yet it was not of that she found herself thinking so much as of Endie's visit.  
Why had she come and what did she want?

## THE GUMPS—The Jury Is Still Out



## SOMEBODY'S STENOG—Cam Eats Lots of Fish



## The Young Lady Across the Way



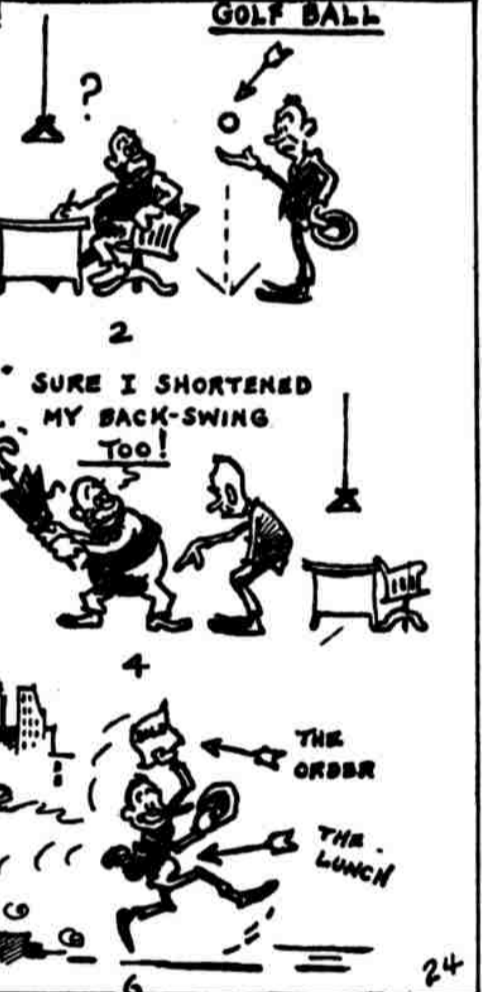
## SALESMANSHIP



## GOLF BALL



## SCHOOL DAYS



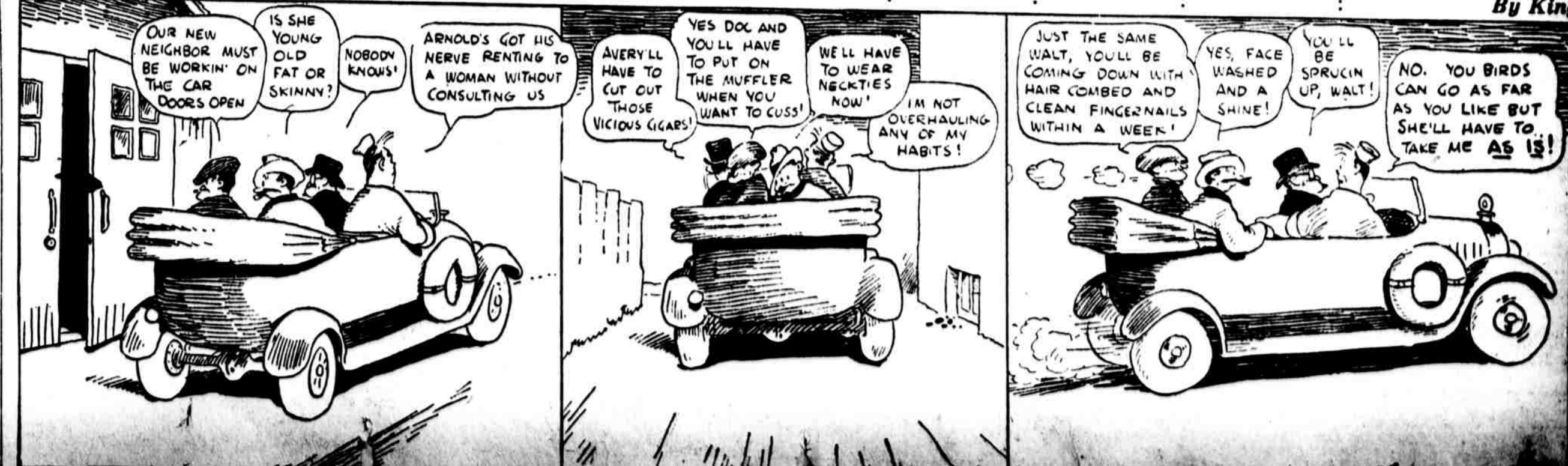
## THE LUNATIC



## PETEY—Something Wrong With That School



## GASOLINE ALLEY—Means Nothing in Walt's Young Life



CONTINUED TOMORROW