

LOVE WILL NEVER DIE

By JOHN HUNTER

WHO'S WHO IN THE STORY

AUDREY BENT—Beautiful, she is characterized in the world's newspapers as a girl in love with...

MR. HARKNESS—handsome, with good income, under the impression of Audrey's beauty and intelligence. He is a wealthy, successful man, a great success in business, and he is in love with Audrey's love and trust.

CONSTANCE—Audrey's mother, still young in her early middle age. She is the owner of a fashionable club where amusement goes on, but Audrey is ignorant of this. She is the divorced wife of...

MRS. CONNINGTON—an English country lane, of an austere temperament but deep feeling, who has returned to London after many years abroad.

AUNT ELLA—not worldly wise but wise in the spirit, with whom Audrey lives.

MR. RICHARD PRESLOW—a new arrival in Connington who expects to be a big success in the city. He is a young man, full of energy and ambition, who is determined to marry her.

MRS. DENBIGH—a well-to-do but sincere and kindly woman, who is friendly to Audrey.

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"One day—I will answer," she faltered. "I cannot do so now." A little pain showed in Preslow's eyes. She added: "But I think—I shall try. I think that I shall love you—one day."

"My dear," whispered Preslow. He drew her to him and she submitted to his embrace, unresisting and silent. Yet when he kissed her lips were cold—like ice.

The yellow car thrummed onward up the hill, and the darkness crept up from the eastern skies.

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Incomplete Surrender

Constance studied her. She could realize something of Audrey's feelings.

"What did you say to him?" she repeated.

"I told him to wait. That one day I might care for him. He kissed me."

Constance bit her lip. She knew better than Audrey how far the surrender had gone. Also she knew exactly how easy it would be for Preslow to make that surrender complete. She spoke very slowly.

"Audrey, before you finally say yes, come and see me. Will you promise to do that?"

"Yes, mamma."

They were silent for some time. Audrey was vainly endeavoring to pierce the fog of her own thoughts and desires. Constance was wondering dumbly why all this was leading; striving desperately to smother and kill an impulse which, as the days passed, was growing stronger and stronger within her.

At last Audrey said: "Can you tell me Mr. Harkness' address?"

"Why do you want it?" Constance's tone was cold and her eyes suddenly very alert.

"I want to call on him," Audrey's manner had none of its previous hesitation, but was sure and steady.

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She was aware that Harkness was searching her face anxiously as she hesitated in the doorway, and she smiled up at him.

"I hope I haven't upset your arrangements for this morning," she said.

"I never have any arrangements," answered Harkness. "I am more than pleased to see you. Will you sit down? Your mother knows about this?"

The Race Was Lost Deliberately

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But Audrey had lost a great deal of her enthusiasm. She was shocked by the idea that Harkness might have deliberately run his horse to lose, knowing, as he must, that thousands of people had staked their money on it. She thought of Lois—of herself. This man did not care for anybody! He trampled ruthlessly through life, seeking only his own ends! Everybody seemed afraid of him.

"He's a bully!" She repeated it to herself. It was probable that nobody had ever confronted him and given him a candid opinion of himself. He had shamefully used her and escaped unpunished. He had deceived the public. He was betraying the confidence of Lois. And still it seemed that he could win through without chance of punishment.

Audrey possessed all the courage and strength of the Conningtons, and the trait emphasized itself as those thoughts flashed through her mind. It was time Harkness was stopped. Lois should be spared the humiliation he had inflicted on her.

She told herself that she would go to him, cost what it might.

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They had tea, and the yellow car swung off on her long run. Audrey felt strangely resentful. The country was a fairland in the softening light of an imminent rain in the air the nectar of the gods. In Igham they spent half an hour. Audrey thought it the most delightful place she had ever seen. The twilight had settled when they topped Pophill. The road was deserted, and Preslow swung the yellow car in to the right-hand hedge and pulled up. With the stopping of the engine's beat a great silence came down on them.

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Audrey nodded. It seemed a sacrifice Preslow's fingers closed over her hand. She hardly realized the fact, and made no attempt to shake off his clasp.

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Audrey sat very still for some moments after Preslow had made his declaration of love. Her head was still turned away from him, her eyes still to the dim slopes of the downs. Yet she could see neither the downs nor the country.

Preslow loved her! She wondered why she felt no astonishment, hardly wondered what she should say to him. It hardly occurred to her that she had to accept or reject his offer. She seemed so detached from the matter to have any interest in that part of it.

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"Love is not ruled by time," said Preslow.

He was a very debonair gentleman as he bent over her, and in his eyes was shining an eager light, which might easily have been born of love in any other man. It was then that Audrey thought of Harkness. Behind Preslow she seemed watching her. The thin lips were twisted in an ironic smile, as though he mocked at the whole affair with that contempt which was peculiarly his own. She shivered.

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"Nothing. I was thinking."

Preslow knew that her thoughts had been of Harkness. He felt a momentary anger—almost incredulous. Surely that astute adventurer could not possibly be regarded as a serious rival? He suppressed the thought, and spoke softly.

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"It is such a little while since we met," she murmured.

"Love is not ruled by time," said Preslow.

He was a very debonair gentleman as he bent over her, and in his eyes was shining an eager light, which might easily have been born of love in any other man. It was then that Audrey thought of Harkness. Behind Preslow she seemed watching her. The thin lips were twisted in an ironic smile, as though he mocked at the whole affair with that contempt which was peculiarly his own. She shivered.

"What is wrong?" asked Preslow.

"Nothing. I was thinking."

Preslow knew that her thoughts had been of Harkness. He felt a momentary anger—almost incredulous. Surely that astute adventurer could not possibly be regarded as a serious rival? He suppressed the thought, and spoke softly.

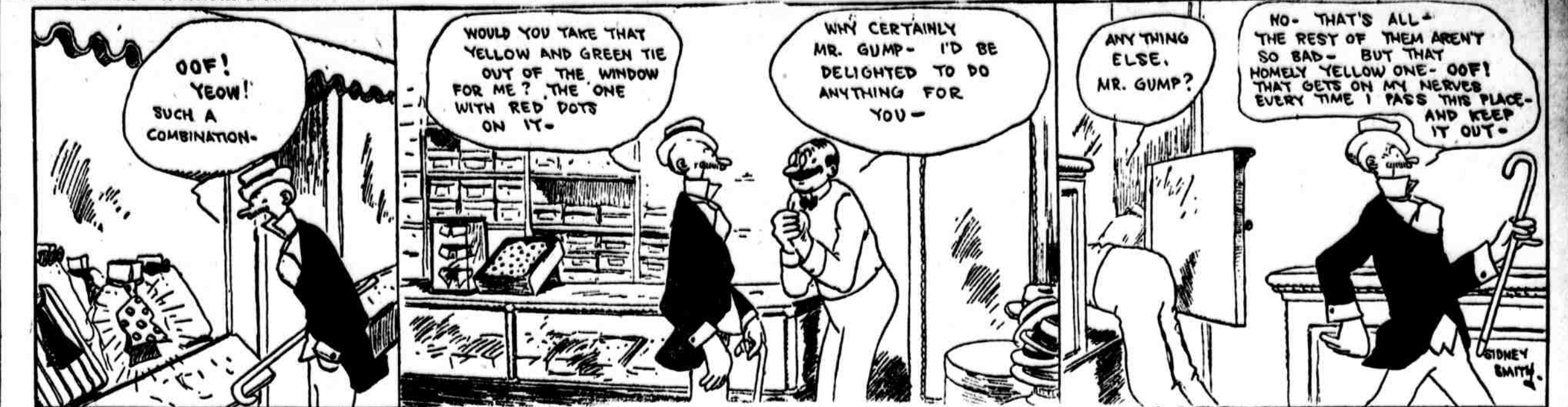
"You have not answered, Audrey. I love you, dear. Can't you tell me that you love me?"

Audrey wavered. She did not know

CONTINUED MONDAY

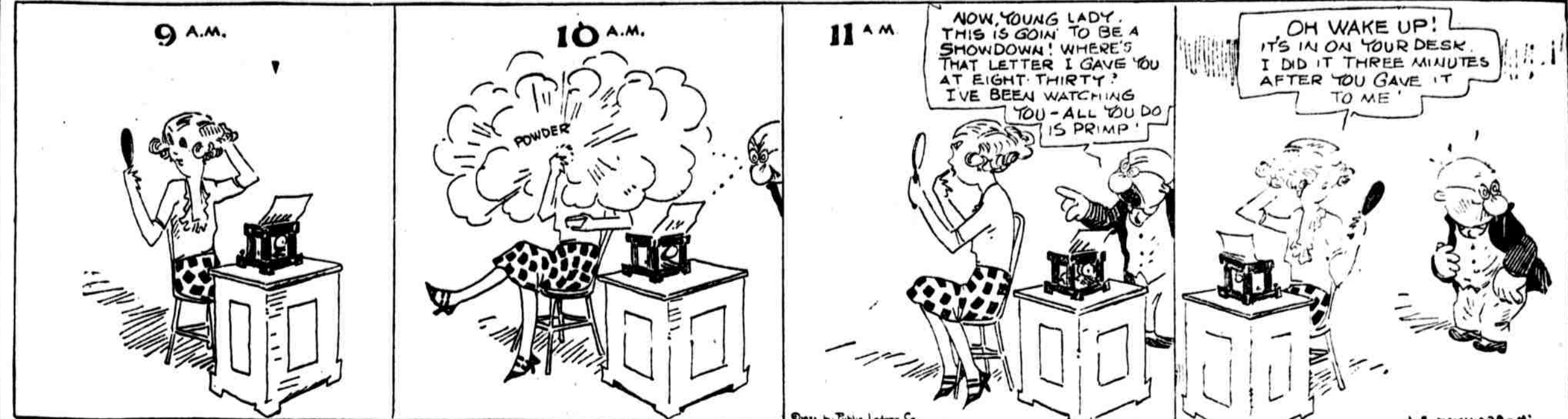
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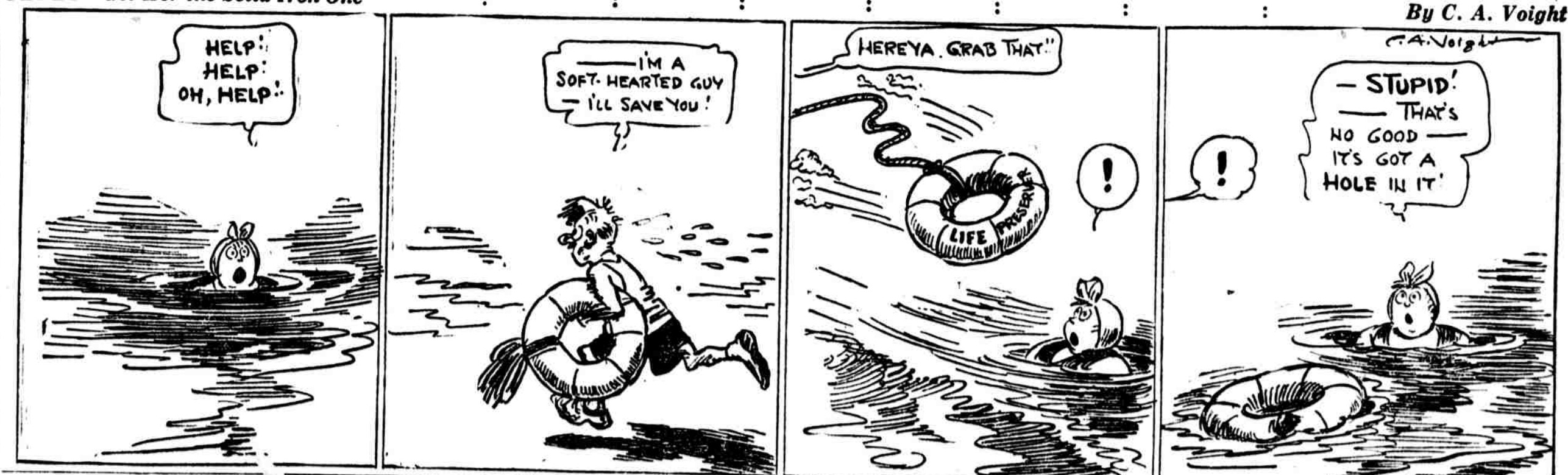
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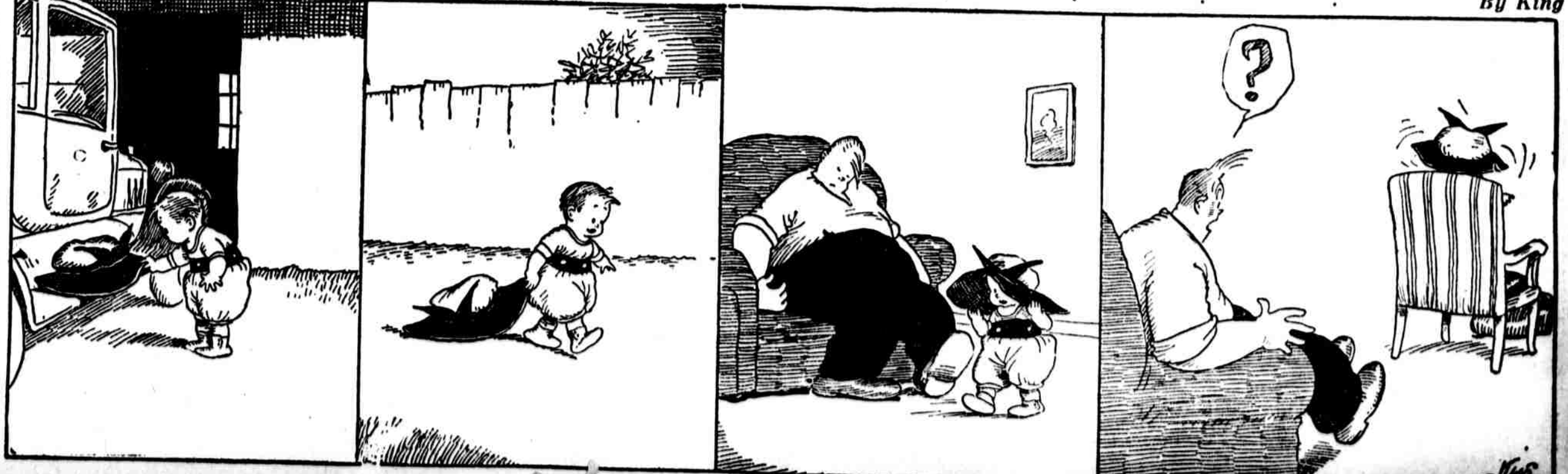
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